



Pop-Up Art: Performing creative disruption in social space

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the dissertation is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Peter Burke

January 2017

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POP-UP ART:

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PETER BURKE

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SUMMARY

In recent decades a more fluid relationship has developed between the artworld, commerce and the general public. In this context the distinction between the roles of artist, curator and audience are increasingly blurred. *Pop-Up Art: Performing Creative Disruption in Social Space* examines the blended nature of these relationships and how they can be negotiated. It does this through practice-led research in the form of pop-up performative interventions at highly regulated commercial and civic sites where art and the public intersect. These sites include art fairs, biennales and galleries as well as shopping precincts and busy streets. Recent theories in contemporary art cast these spaces as a contradictory fusion of commerce, civic regulation and everyday life—with varying types of competition and contestation, fraught with social fragmentation, unequal and exclusive access and competing communicative practices. *Pop-Up Art* aims to manipulate these conditions in a new manner to contribute an understanding of art as social space. Incorporating both invited and impromptu performances, and entrepreneurial approaches in which the artist can engage audiences in a critique of social spaces, the pop-ups set out to challenge the shifting relationships of each site through new investigatory methods. *Pop-Up Art* inserts performance and participatory practice into live spaces in the street and the artworld. It combines fiction and humour to ‘perform surprise’ and disruption by employing the material, symbolic and social aspects of site. *Pop-Up Art* contends that contradiction can play an important role in activating critiques of the disposition of power structures. This is revealed through art practice that operates from a position of ‘close-distance’—it blends with commerce, civic regulation and everyday life but also creates interstices that unsettle conventions. *Pop-Up Art* aims to gently disrupt social patterns rather than dissipate into commercial activity, social works or entertainment. This research offers new knowledge and understandings of creative disruption within social space through performative art practice.

Keywords: performance, humour, fiction, site, social space, participation.

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Pop-Up Art: Performing Creative Disruption in Social Space is a context-responsive project consisting of a series of performative and participatory artworks that investigate ways in which the artist can engage audiences in a critique of social spaces. The approach in this body of work is one of benign provocation. Fiction and humour are combined with surprise, to disrupt the social conventions of selected sites. The artworks adopt the symbolic and material forms of the artworld and commerce, and aim to engage with both art audiences and the general public. Pop-up interventions and marketing practices are adopted to expose power structures in the artworld. These provocations are intended to reveal the invisible dispositions of site. The critique draws attention to the factions, tensions and unevenness of these spaces, especially those where access and inclusion are highly regulated.

Pop-Up Art aims to create interstices within conventionally uneven and/or hierarchical social spaces to produce a levelling effect. It explores the multiple and interdependent roles of the artist as a protagonist who intervenes in regulated space. As the sole performer in that space, the artist can be both partially compromised and not entirely autonomous. The project therefore operates between co-option and autonomy. In this zone, critique may disappear, but a position of close-distance can allow the intent of the artwork to remain intact. Close-distance positions the artist in-between commerce, civic regulation and everyday life. The artist can adopt entrepreneurial approaches that temporarily disrupt and invert social patterns, rather than succumb to commercial activity, social works or entertainment.

Background and context

This project is informed by recent theories and practices of social space, site-specific performance art and audience participation. This dissertation contextualises the project in relation to these theories and practices to provide a background for determining the complex relationship between the contemporary artist and audience, particularly in the context of a neoliberal

economic-political climate. In a neoliberal climate art is absorbed into entrepreneurial forms of the service industry, communicative practices and creative cultures. Creative entrepreneurship embraces all kinds of commercial and experiential partnerships between audiences, commerce and art. Julian Stallabrass (2004) argues that the expansion of art spaces such as museums, biennales and other art events from the 1990s has meant that their activities have become more commercial as they internalise more corporate modes of activity. As they establish close relationships with business, and draw their products closer to commercial culture, they model themselves more on shops and theme parks than libraries. He contends contemporary art's close contact with selected elements of a mass culture is so pervasive that it is sometimes confused with engagement of real life. In this context public space therefore becomes a contradictory fusion of commerce, civic regulation and everyday life—with varying types of competition and contestation, fraught with social fragmentation, unequal and exclusive access and competing communicative practices (Kwon 2000; 2005). Jacques Rancière (2009; 2010; 2011) claims the contemporary artist is compelled to respond to these conditions by activating audiences in social spaces. For Rancière, audiences are muted by consumerism and spectacle. They are already actors in their own story, and not necessarily passive. An emancipated audience is a community of narrators and translators, what he terms an “unpredictable subject” (Rancière 2011). *Pop-Up Art* aims to connect with this unpredictable subject in the contested spaces between art and entertainment, where interactions cannot always be anticipated.

Underpinning these ideas is Henri Lefebvre's (1991) premise that space does not exist by itself but is socially produced. Society and every mode of production create social space and social time. Context and meaning rely on an understanding of social patterns, power relations and tensions peculiar to each site and situation. In order that art is not subsumed by commercial concerns, this research project aims to unsettle social conventions that Pierre Bourdieu (1992) defines as “habitus”—a set of dispositions that incline agents to act or react in certain ways. To achieve this *Pop-Up Art* employs creative disruption, fiction, humour and close-distance.

The distinction between the roles of artist, curator and audience are shifting in contemporary art practice—and as artists operate interdependently—allowing for a more entrepreneurial relationship to develop between the artworld, commerce and the general public. These conditions produce salient consequences for the artworld and the public. This is a development from earlier critiques acting in opposition to the art establishment and the resultant co-option of such avant-garde practices into the canons of art—such as the evolution of performance art in the early twentieth century—from Dada, 1960s performance, Happenings and institutional critique to post 1990s, socially engaged and community-based practices. Tactics of provocation, disruption and resistance are part of this history of art and its established practice.

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary art practices is a self-conscious awareness that absolute opposition to the establishment—and to the political economy of art and society—is redundant. This awareness emerges from the history of institutional co-option of avant-garde practices (Bürger 1974) and the ways in which consumer culture has appropriated art for its own capitalist purposes. In this context, as theorist Grant H Kester argues, “[d]etachment is necessary because art is constantly in danger of being subsumed [by] consumer culture, propaganda or ‘entertainment’” (2011, p. 32). This does not mean the oppositional impulse is negated, but rather that art is part of the culture of consumer entertainment, and not completely separate to it; what Kester refers to as a “continuum” in forms of cultural production (2011, p. 37). Rancière also refuses to separate art and popular culture and sees the aesthetic regime of art as a tool to locate the political within the art form itself. He views barriers that separate art from entertainment (and therefore art from life) as merely artificial and can be traversed, and entertainment forms assumed to create passivity, such as cinema or theatre, can be powerful and political if they move the audience.

Pop-Up Art articulates this complexity through a series of performative artworks that operate between autonomy and co-option. They embrace entrepreneurial contexts and move between commerce, politics, poetics and play. Many of the artworks created for *Pop-Up Art* depend on, yet question,

art's allegiance to commercial activity. They evolved with the support of cultural institutions, and it became apparent that a degree of distance was needed between these relationships to avoid critique disappearing. For example, the PhD pieces *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* examined in this dissertation utilise the social relations within art fairs, while *The Standard Special Lift-Out* operates within the corporate space of a tabloid newspaper. Detachment from the organisers was needed for the work to take effect. Other pieces such as *Whaleburger*, *Triage*, *Over the Barricade*, *Ban the Biennale?* and *Attaché Case*, take place in city streets, conferences, exhibitions or competitions and necessitate some distance to maintain agency. As a consolidated project, *Pop-Up Art* asserts an active space in entrepreneurial contexts for the artist and participants. The artworks aim to activate divergent opinions and relations in a site over idealised notions of togetherness.

Pop-Up Art contributes to contemporary discourses of artworld hierarchies, fiction, humour and social space. It offers unique insights into participatory and performative art practice through the method of close-distance—it is a malleable, shifting space that seeks to sustain the critical action of art. This dissertation analyses how close-distance was uncovered through practice-led research that focused on creating pop-ups in highly contested social spaces where the critical effect of art can be easily dispelled. Close-distance offers an attitude and position that is multi-edged and porous in sites where the artist can be restricted to one position. It allows the artwork to occupy a conscious interstice between a range of binaries—autonomy and co-option, truth and fiction, humour and seriousness, antagonism and harmony, politics and poetics. Close-distance enables a flexible and ambiguous attitude as an alternative to didactic approaches.

Pop-Up Art draws from the fields of art, art theory, cultural studies, media studies, urban theory, political theory, human geography and extends to social marketing practices and interactions with everyday urban cultures. This project examines the framework of site, social space and production set out by Miwon Kwon, Jacques Rancière, Chantal Mouffe, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Lefebvre. While the artwork led the theoretical research, the theory has

informed the approaches employed in the pop-ups—it provided frameworks for the methods of humour and fiction, disruption and other tactics. The project investigates the tension between convivial and provocative methods used in contemporary socially engaged and participatory art practices highlighted in the writing of Kester and Claire Bishop. This project also investigates artists' practices including Francis Alÿs who uses ephemeral actions, allegories and poetic gestures to confront issues critical to contemporary society, Andrea Fraser who critiques habitus within art institutions, and The Yes Men (Jacques Servin and Igor Vamos) who perform interventions into commercial sites. Together, these artists and theorists open up ways to look at how performance and participatory art can offer methods to reimagine art in the social realm. This dissertation contextualises the aims and objectives, methods, rationale and research outcomes of a series of pop-up performances within a broader field of enquiry into contradictory social spaces that fuse commerce, civic regulation and everyday life.

Rationale

The rationale for this project was arrived at through questioning how an artist can perform creative disruption within in a world of complex power relations. It is motivated by a concern for uncovering methods in which an artist—operating in a contested public sphere—can unsettle dominant paradigms and create interplay between art and life. *Pop-Up Art* was conceived as a series of experiments to unearth and test distinct models for performative and participatory artworks that can rethink these conditions.

As the artworld, commerce and general public become more intertwined, and as art descends into commodification and cooption (Mouffe 2007), it signals significant consequences for the artist and audience alike. Pivotal factors of neoliberalism, such as the rise of the culture industry and the increasing privatisation of public visual and social space, dramatically transform the cultural landscape (Thompson 2004, p. 14). There is a risk that audiences within consumer society passively absorb art and culture, and that critique can disappear. *Pop-Up Art* examines the changing nature of these shifts and what methods can be applied to critique this phenomenon.

The rapid increase in the number of international biennales and art fairs from the 1980s onwards, and the populism of art events, such as *White Night* (2013-) and *Melbourne Now* (2013-14) in Australia, have meant that art is encroached upon by a wide range of commercial, civic and curatorial concerns. In this context as the role of the artist, audience and commissioning bodies become less defined, and as art is presented in more accessible forms, it is crucial that art's ability to critique does not dissipate. The "social turn" in art (Bishop 2012a) opens up opportunities for artists to partner with audiences and other 'collaborators' such as commissioning bodies, artists and curators. Through various types of participation, conventional notions of artistic autonomy are shifting. There is also a risk that through liberties the current conditions afford, culture industries impinge on art's ability to be self-critical. *Pop-Up Art* directly addresses these conditions. However, it does not seek to reclaim complete artistic autonomy, nor do the artworks produced profess to completely transform social spaces. Instead, the interventions create small ruptures in social conventions of site and in practices of participation by temporarily drawing attention to, and unsettling, the placidity of these conditions. Their transformative effect is a poetic *and* political insertion into social space.

Rather than devising a singular body of 'resolved' artworks for the research, the project is designed as a series of 'tests' that are context-specific and reflexive. The project consolidates a range of practical experiments that trial various theories and approaches to intervention, performance, participation. The tests are designed to shift and change in their respective sites, and the methods differ from site to site—they are not closed scores or installations. This dissertation through writing identifies the motivations underpinning the reflexive decision-making behind the works.

The research examines the dynamics of relational processes—how flexible models of performative and participatory art can open up temporary, discursive spaces. Informed by Mouffe's concept of 'agonistic' spaces, the separate pieces bring underlying issues of power and conflict into the public realm for debate. This project considers how the dynamics of the struggle

over social space can be made visible when positions of complete resistance are futile, and erasing traces of power and exclusion are impossible for the artist. *Pop-Up Art* aims to activate a dynamic space for benign disruption.

As outlined in Chapter three, Performing Disruption, the combined methods of fiction, humour and disruption offer a way for artists and participants to interject social spaces and operate *in-between*. Combined with existing pop-up forms, such as tabloid newspapers, speed dating, spruiking and protests, the methods provide a means to blend into existing spaces—and invert existing social conventions. It is an immersive and risky approach that relies on reflexivity to create close-distance. Flexibility is necessary to sustain critique in the flux and tumult of sites in which the pop-ups take place. The approach of close-distance can uncover multiple ways to create a rub.

Several of the pop-ups created during the PhD were easily co-opted by the artworld to the extent that they have become official exhibits at art fairs and adopted as marketing tools for events. *Pursuit* (2012-13) and *Over the Barricade* (2014) discussed in chapters four and six are two examples. The commercial appeal of the pop-up at this particular moment in time may reflect a social zeitgeist, evidenced in the increasing popularity of performative and participatory art across curatorial programs, conferences and events such as *Performa* (2004-), the *Festival of Live Art* (2014-), *The Creative Time Summit* (2013), *Spectres of Evaluation* (2014), *APT8 Live at the Asia Pacific Triennial*, (2015), Kaldor projects including *Marina Abramović: In Residence* (2015) and *What Happens Now?: Public Art Melbourne Biennial Lab* (2016). Performance and participation have experiential value, but they are also service-based products with market value. Contemporary art, particularly in its avant-garde forms, is assumed to be in rebellion against the system, but “it actually acquires a seductive commercial appeal within it” (Wu cited in Thompson & Sholette 2004, p. 52). *Pop-Up Art*’s popularity reflects the compelling nature of performative art practices—in convivial and subversive forms—as consumable commodities.

Many of the works in this project have come about through residencies, commissions, exhibitions and invitations. Undoubtedly, contemporary artists are made buoyant by entrepreneurial relationships. *Pop-Up Art* explores the multiple positions of the artist—as one who moves between co-opting others via provocation, mediation, curation—and as one who is co-opted via commission, curation or sub-contract. As art and commerce continually evolve and new, blended relationships emerge, the roles of the artist and collaborators are redefined. The contemporary artist therefore may not be completely independent, nor totally co-opted, but positioned in-between. This project analyses to what degree close-distance can provide a way for the artist to collaborate with others as well as have agency to shape discourse and critique.

Aims and objectives

Pop-Up Art aims to underscore ways in which creative disruption can be used to critique the shifting roles and relationships of the artist, curator and audience; how fiction and humour can play a role within relational and performative art practices to unsettle the social conventions of regulated sites and situations; and how performance art practices can use the material, symbolic and social relations of site to critique from within these spaces. This project aims to contribute a fuller understanding of the shift toward entrepreneurial relationships through a series of interventions in regulated spaces where art practice and the public intersect. These spaces include art fairs, biennales and galleries as well as shopping precincts and streets.

The pop-ups introduce playful methods of humour and fiction into public sites and employ the existing material—symbolic and social aspects of site—to shift or prick consciousness about the conventions within social space. The pieces experiment with convivial and uncomfortable methods of engagement that combine disruption, intervention and provocation to activate participation. The project aims to discover ways the contemporary artist can work *between* art and commerce by embracing the paradoxes that social space readily accommodates. By creating poetic interventions and developing close-distance, the project aims to highlight the often unacknowledged dispositions

and invisible politics of site. In doing so, it aims to demystify hierarchies and produce a levelling effect. It attempts to overcome the alienation of social relations in art and return to audiences the element of participation of which they have been robbed (Rancière 2011). *Pop-Up Art* challenges the submersion of art into the institutionalisation, management and regulation of social space. It aims to create art that is not solely consumed as entertainment, but maintains its ability to posit questions.

Research questions

Three key questions drive this research:

1. How can the artist use creative disruption to critique the blended relationships between artist, curator and audience?
2. How can fiction and humour be used in performative art practice to unsettle social conventions and relations of the artworld and the street?
3. How can performance art practices activate participation and provoke critique of the social, symbolic and material aspects of space?

Methods

Pop-Up Art adopts a range of methods of interaction and encounter involving performance, with myself acting as key protagonist. The research is context-responsive—it uses the conditions of a site to draw attention to habitus or dispositions within that site. Pop-up pieces that adopt the social, symbolic and material aspects of site are created in order to develop connections with audiences in that context. Audiences may be observers and at other times participants who engage in critiques of site. The type of interaction created is often designed around pop-ups and street-based practices because of their ability to generate informal and spontaneous interaction. While the pop-ups blend into their environments they can also stand out, and use methods of ‘fact-o-fiction’—a term developed through practice to highlight the ambiguous

territory between fact and fiction. Fact-o-fiction refers to the blending of the 'real' and the 'fabricated' within advertising, the mass media and art. Fact-o-fiction, for example, may mimic the seductive appeal of a tabloid newspaper or advertising. The bottom line is not to mislead or sell, but to provoke critique of the constructed nature of the media. The pop-ups 'perform surprise' and create double-take experiences where passers-by may look twice and question what is being enacted. Like a Trojan horse the pop-ups hijack a variety of activities such as black market vending, tabloid newspapers, protesting, picket lines and speed dating. By synthesising popular culture and relational art, the pop-ups experiment with a range of altruistic, benign and provocative methods of intervention to engage audiences.

The pop-ups also draw on topical content that addresses the politics and contradictions of site. For example, several pieces deal with artworld issues such as the corporatisation of art and the professionalisation of the artist. Other pieces address the destruction to the natural world through commercial whaling and tree vandalism, while other works touch on popular issues in the mass media such as immigration and football. This content is intended to unsettle the usual reception of these issues—often understood through the news media—and to provoke debate. They combine poetic intervention, lightness, fiction, humour or a sense of the absurd to prick consciousness and unsettle the status quo of behavioural patterns and power relations.

Pop-Up Art constitutes a singular critical project, but the artworks are not designed to form one unified 'body' of work. The artworks form an interlinked chain consisting of separate tests that examine the viabilities and limits of disruption, humour and fiction in contested social spaces. The artworks encompass the key thrust of the core research questions. Each artwork is a 'component', 'piece' or test that interrogates a dynamic space between autonomy and cooption. To create this space, each piece offers a slightly different chemistry of humour, fiction, conviviality and disruption. The chemistry shifts from piece to piece. The artworks are developed in response to one another, and therefore inform each other, but they are not created in a logical sequence. Nor are they designed to sit together as one visually

coherent project. For example, *Pursuit*'s experimentation with cooption in the artworld, (discussed in Chapter four, Activating Artworld Relations), influenced the approach to collaboration with a newspaper company for *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, (discussed in Chapter five, Fact-o-fiction). The pieces are visually and conceptually disparate, but both respond to and examine the dynamics between cooption and autonomy. The curatorial and entrepreneurial approach adopted in *Pursuit* also led to an altruistic approach for *Attaché Case*, (discussed in Chapter six, Site and Situation). *Attaché Case* borrowed the look and feel of *Pursuit*, but resisted its commercial angle. Instead it created an exhibition platform for an alternative community. Some pieces experiment with light humour, while other pieces adopt farce or parody. This 'ricochet' approach weaves throughout *Pop-Up Art*—partly to test another tactic, and partly in response to a new site and situation. Within the dissertation the separate pieces are grouped together into chapters according to the focus of the research questions—artworld relations, fiction and humour, and site. The chapters unpack relevant theories by reflecting on a number of artworks, not singular pieces. The final presentation of the artworks takes the form of an online portal (website) consisting of representations (video and images) of the live pieces. The various amalgams ultimately offer new knowledge of the position of close-distance.

Dissertation outline

In the following chapters core ideas that underpin the practical research are expanded upon: the shifting social relationships of the contemporary artworld, the use of fiction and humour to critique the conventions of site, and the experience of social space in a neoliberal climate. The ideas put forward by Kwon, Bourdieu, Lefebvre, Mouffe, Kester, Bishop and other contemporary theorists and art practitioners are introduced in a review of parallel research in the field in Chapter two and an outline of methods in Chapter three. The ideas are explored further across nine pieces that form the substance of the PhD project. The term 'piece' is used as a descriptive term to reference each of the individual performances in the PhD project.

In Chapter four, Activating Artworld Relations, two pieces specifically created for art fairs, *Pursuit* (2012-13) and *Love is in the Fair* (2014), are examined for the way they critique artworld conventions and hierarchies that determine accessibility and participation. Chapter five, Fact-o-fiction focuses on how the pieces *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* invite public conversations about topical issues. It considers how the fact-o-fiction method operates as a means to unsettle conventions: how fiction works with humour, and how humour helps to break down social barriers and reveal fiction and edifice. Chapter six, Site and Situation, analyses three developmental experiments, *Mishap*, *Shoelaces* and *Free Tissues*, and four pieces, *Triage*, *Over the Barricade*, *Ban the Biennale?* and *Attaché Case* that invite participation within a city street, a conference, a competition and a travelling exhibition. An examination is conducted into how the material and symbolic nature of these works activate and highlight the politics of site.

Chapter seven's Conclusion consolidates the experiential innovation this research has progressively developed: the performative position of close-distance that situates the artist and audience in-between commerce, art and real life. While it could be said that this is an ambivalent position for the artist, it is argued that within co-option and compromise artists can shape discourse by unsettling the status quo and creating a levelling effect.

Although specific pieces are discussed in each chapter, the ideas are continuous and interlinked across the whole project including the works in the Appropriate Durable Record. The dissertation includes a theoretical analysis of the work as well as descriptions that provide a sense of the live performance and the types of encounters they generated. The pieces that are presented and discussed in the dissertation and are included in the ADR and website are a selection of the works that were created during the research period. They demonstrate the range of experimentation that took place. Many other case studies were performed, but they were excluded from the dissertation, ADR and website because they were repeated experiments, their outcomes did not add anything new to the arguments in each chapter, or they

shifted beyond the parameters of the core research questions. *Pursuit* for example, consisted of thirteen iterations, but only three are discussed in the dissertation. These three performances set up an important dynamic between intervention, cooption and rebuttal that interweaves throughout the whole project. As I will discuss, the case studies *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* and *MMM, Whaleburger (Melbourne)* intersect and overlap—the various iterations are not repetitions. They took place in different contexts and offer subtle changes to relationships with humour, audiences and power—all integral to the concept of close-distance and to the site-responsive nature of the research.

2 | POSITIONING THE RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Introduction

Pop-Up Art is situated in relation to art practices, artworks and literature that engage audiences through performance and participation. It encompasses a range of material informed by contemporary art, art theory, cultural studies, institutional critique, media studies, urban theory, political theory and human geography. The research contextualises relational art practices within sites of the street and the artworld. It draws from a long history of twentieth century ideas and art practices in performance which have informed contemporary art and literature—from European Dada and Futurist theatre to Happenings, body art, performance art, the Situationist International and Fluxus events in the 1960s, through to the development of Invisible theatre in the 1980s and relational art of the 1990s. In the following review of literature and art, the arguments around the concepts artworld, performance art, audiences and social space provide a background to participatory art practices that can offer new ways to maintain critique in social spaces.

Artworld

Within this research, the term ‘artworld’ encompasses a constellation of intersecting social relationships, roles, conventions, supports, objects and sites that are constantly evolving through discourse. It consists of “the personal, social, historical, political and economic relationships between individuals, communities and institutions that revolve around the creation, exhibition and trade of art” (Frost 2015). These dynamics are investigated by contemporary writers; Miwon Kwon (2002; 2005), Pierre Bourdieu (1992), Howard S Becker (2008), Claire Bishop (2012a), Grant H Kester (2011), Chantal Mouffe (2005; 2007), Jacques Rancière (2010), Nicholas Bourriaud (1998), Nato Thompson (2015), Okwui Enwezor (2015), Hal Foster (1996), Charles Green (2001), Shannon Jackson (2011), Julian Stallabrass (2004) and Jack Bankowsky (2005).

For Becker, the artworld is an interconnected network “of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art” (2008, p. 34). Artistic reputation is established by the collective action undertaken by artists, engineers, producers, workers, curators, critics, professionals, funding bodies and audiences that constitute the same artworld and are united by shared conventions (Ibid.). Bourdieu argues power struggles within the artworld determine the value and identification of art through its production. “All of those who have ties to art and who, living for art and living off art confront each other in the competitive struggle over the definition of the meaning and value of the work of art” (1992, pp. 295-296).

The conventions that Becker identifies can be usefully understood through Bourdieu’s (1979; 1996) ideas of habitus—a set of *dispositions* that incline a person to act and react in certain ways. Habitus is a dual system of the production and the appreciation of practices, and a socialised understanding of life experience (1992, p. 352). Dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes “which are ‘regular’ without being consciously coordinated or governed by any ‘rule’” (Ibid.). This dynamic is further understood through Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of “cultural capital” that ascribes a symbolic value to a person (e.g. artist, curator) or object (e.g. artwork) based on a perceived status within culture. The artworld’s socially recognised rules and hierarchies are legitimised culturally and symbolically. For example, the contemporary context is shaped by “nomadic artists and curators” (Foster 2009, p. 43) who contribute to new systems, practices and identities for art across multiple platforms such as biennales, art fairs and other sites.

The neoliberal condition, which provides a context for this research, affords freedoms, opportunities and supports for the artist and for other collaborators. This merger creates new conditions that are readily accepted as norms. In his criticism of artworld dynamics, Stallabrass (2004) argues art is conventionally understood to be a place for creative freedom where artists drive new ideas. Instead, multiple, interdependent forces including commerce and populism drive contemporary art practice. He claims artists may shock, break the rules

and waver between confronting audiences with profundity or triviality, but behind the variety and the unpredictable nature of the contemporary artworld, there lies a “grim uniformity” and superficiality (or “lightness of being”). In this context, dissensus can forge a unique space for art. As Rancière (2010) argues, by exposing and activating a breach within what is considered ‘sensible’—notions that determine the visible and invisible, the audible and silent—forms of inclusion and exclusion in a community can be highlighted—the artist can create an interstice for art that is distinct from commerce or entertainment. Mouffe (2007), on the other hand, asserts artists must abandon the modernist illusion of the “privileged artist” altogether and join a political mission to produce “counter-hegemonic interventions”—these critical art forms occupy social space to stimulate a disruption to the smooth edifice that corporate capitalism spreads. They reveal capitalism’s repressive nature and make visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. Like Rancière, Mouffe argues for activating a self-reflexivity in people who are numbed or silenced within oppressive hegemonies.

This dissertation examines the nature of the interdependent forces that drive art practices and how the artist can critique the current conditions to contextualise the PhD practice in the sites of the artworld. For example, the artwork *Pursuit* in this project aims to sell artworks in art fair sites and simultaneously critique the roles and social relations of the artworld. In doing so, it exposes some of the shifting conditions of the artworld and the plurality of intersecting relationships—and uncovers how the artist can negotiate them.

As the history of the twentieth century avant-garde demonstrates (Bürger 1984), there is a strong history of criticism of the artworld that becomes absorbed back into the artworld itself. Critiques of this condition are played out in numerous artworks such as Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries’ explorations of the international art market (*The Art of Sleep* 2006) and artist residencies (*It’s a Pleasure to be Here: We have Nothing to Say* 2011); Claes Oldenburg’s mock art supermarket in a street (*The Store* 1961); Hans Haacke’s audience poll (*MoMA Poll* 1970); Bernhard Cella’s biennale interventions (*What does the artist do after the death of the curator?* 2007-).



Fig. 1 Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 1989
Photo: © Tate, London 2017, <http://www.tate.org.uk>



Fig. 2 Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights*, 1989
Photo: © Tate, London 2017, <http://www.tate.org.uk>

Like these artists who employ performance or participation, Andrea Fraser offers a humorous approach to institutional critique within actual sites that support the artist. In her work *Museum Highlights* (1989) (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) for example, Fraser performs the role of Jane Castleton, a docent who conducts a seemingly conventional gallery tour at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Castleton passionately unravels the history of the institution and its collection, but also offers profundities on the cafeteria décor, water fountain, cloakroom, exit signs and toilets. She digresses onto broader political and social ideas that have historically been placed on the value of art, especially notions of class and taste (Tate 2015, Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* 1989). On the surface the performance may appear to parody docents, but on the contrary, Fraser speaks about unacknowledged volunteer labour that feeds into the artworld, particularly structures that support the critique, exhibition and sale of art. By highlighting a familiar role within the museum, Fraser amplifies the unevenness of the artworld, enacts her own ambivalence, and incites audiences to reflect on their own position. Fraser does not attempt to directly transform the artworld. Acutely aware of the Möbius-style twist of artworld relations—which keep the artist buoyant—Fraser playfully activates an analysis of artworld habitus.

In another artworld critique, Yayoi Kusama attempted to sell her sculptures directly to the public at the 1966 *Venice Biennale* (*Narcissus Garden* 1966). The controversial action was performed in a site where artwork is not conventionally sold. For Kusama, it was an opportunity to critique the artworld's obsession with the art commodity. However, biennale authorities

objected to the artist peddling her work “like hot dogs or ice cream cones” (Queensland Art Gallery 2011, Yoyoi Kusama *Look Now, See Forever*).

In two more recent examples in Australia, Anastasia Klose marketed her own brand of t-shirts inside her ‘gift shop’ at the National Gallery of Victoria during the exhibition *Melbourne Now (One Stop Knock off Shop 2013-14)*; and the artists Jason Maling and Lara Thoms invited six ambassadors from the feted industries of freeform knitting, cosplay, muscle cars, psychic analysis, French antiques and tattooing to present their booths within a “meta expo” within the *Melbourne Art Fair (Exposition 2014)*. For some audiences, their presence was out of place, for others, it made the delineations of contemporary art seem arbitrary. These works blended into their sites—at the same time they produced a “rupture” (Rancière 2009; 2010) to insert critique.

Like these examples from contemporary visual culture, *Pop-Up Art* uses performance, participation, fiction and humour to activate critiques of habitus within art sites and social spaces. It examines how the contemporary artworld conditions that Stallabrass identifies can be negotiated.

Contemporary socially engaged art

The trajectory of the social turn in the artworld can be analysed through a resistance of capitalism and material-based practices; a swing towards performative and immaterial art practices; a surge in activist and community-centred art; and a shift in creative authorship and audience participation. It can also be traced through consumer culture, the proliferation of socially based marketing practices, burgeoning global culture (such as biennales and art fairs), the rise of social media and power relations. These dialectics run intersect and are heavily contested by contemporary writers including Bourriaud (1998), Kester (2007; 2011), Bishop (2004; 2012), Kwon (2002; 2005), Rancière (2011), Thompson (2015), Foster (2003), Mouffe (2007), Stewart Martin (2007), and Dean Kenning (2009). The social in art can also be examined in the work contemporary international artists who take social relations as their medium such as Andrea Fraser, Dialogue, Francis Alÿs, Christof Schlingensief, Tino Sehgal, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Marina Abramović.

Writing during the upsurge of 1990s internet culture, Bourriaud identifies a critical shift in art practice towards social encounters as a form. In *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), he defines this shift as “an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space” (p. 14). From Bourriaud’s point of view, the propulsion towards the social is driven by the changing mental space opened by the internet—a do it yourself culture of user-friendliness, social networking, connectivity, sampling and sharing. Human relations are purportedly “no longer directly experienced” and become blurred by their spectacular presentation in consumer culture (Ibid. p. 9).

Bourriaud’s ideas have been heavily challenged for moving too easily over the politics of relational aesthetics and for their truncated historical references. The convivial “micro utopias” or “micro communities” he champions promises to overcome the reification of social relationships. He fails to acknowledge the temporality of participatory art practices that are easily packaged and highly marketable—useful for the itinerant artist travelling from one biennial to the next. Therefore the complicity between relational aesthetic practices and the neoliberal context in which they operate is unaccounted for (Martin 2007). In promoting artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija—who has facilitated convivial get-togethers with art audiences in galleries to share a meal (*untitled 1992/1995 (free/still)*, 1992-2011) or play musical instruments—these seemingly ideal models of social harmony are produced exclusively for art audiences, rarely extend beyond the gallery, perpetuate the insular nature of the artworld, and fail to critique their own relationship to capitalism.

At its best relational art creates social “antidotes” to post-industrial relations (Kester 2011) and hands-on micro utopias—“spaces where interhuman relations can occur alongside, and as an alternative to, the commodified zones of capitalist life; where we can take a break from being atomised consumers and in the process model new possibilities of social being” (Kenning 2009, p. 435).



Fig. 3 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Free*, 2008
Photo: © MoMA, 2017, <http://www.moma.org>



Fig. 4 Liam Gillick, *Volvo Bar*, 2008

Bourriaud's claim that "immaterial labor is the site of the most decisive re-articulation of political power" (Kester & Wilson 2007, p. 112), is rejected by both Kester and Bishop. In *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011), Kester argues "we live in the 'society of the spectacle' in which even social relations are reified and the social bond has turned into a standardized artifact" (p. 29). Socially engaged art is the expression of an "ongoing struggle to develop a compensatory cultural response to the dehumanising effects of modernity" (Wilson & Kester 2007, p. 112). While Kester claims Bourriaud "has captured something that is undeniably central to a recent generation of artists: a concern with social and collective interaction" (Ibid. p. 30), Bourriaud's conventional avant-garde genealogy is "modeled on the principle of otherness" (Ibid. p. 31) and fails to convey the complexity of socially engaged art over the last several decades (Ibid.). Bourriaud excludes "art practices from the traditions of activist and community-based practice" (Ibid. p. 112) which have much in common with contemporary social practice.

The artists Bourriaud endorse in his curated programs (such as Tiravanija and Liam Gillick) (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4) do not account for collaborative strategies to engage local communities or address social and ecological issues in any practical manner outside of the artworld. Kester contests art has potential to not only design models for exchange (as Bourriaud suggests), but to apply them to real world situations. Art can also serve the purpose of a social function, whether it is through the making of a well crafted object, working within disadvantaged communities, or disrupting viewer perceptions.

Kester sees the potential for artists to work productively within “particular matrices of institutional power and cultural exchange ... rather than from an ironic distance” (Ibid. p. 112). In his view, art is better served by being embedded in communities. For example, the collective Dialogue (see Fig. 5 and Fig. 6) facilitate material improvements to basic infrastructure by designing and building water pump sites for women in collaboration with rural villages in central India. These sites also become spaces of social dialogue and recreation, as much as spaces of work and basic sustenance.

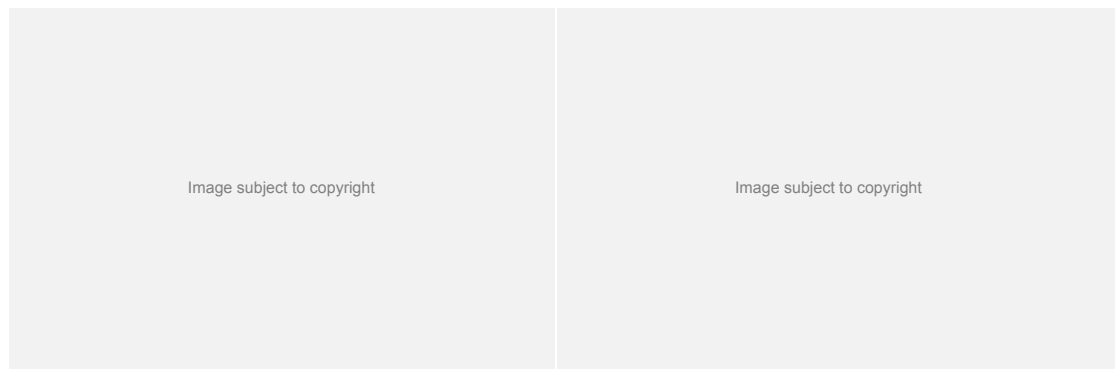


Fig. 5 Dialogue, *Water Pumps (Nalapar sites)*, Kopaweda, India, 2005

Fig. 6 Dialogue, *Water Pumps (Nalapar sites)*, Kopaweda, India, 2005

For Bishop (2012a), the most prevalent and influential modes of intervention are collective and participatory projects, but she argues Kester’s community-based approach is too complicit with government policies, and Bourriard’s concept of relational aesthetics is far too convivial. Bishop claims the community service style projects defended by Kester mask real social contradictions, merely compensating symbolically for the dismantling of state-run social service programs, which are tied to neoliberal cultural policies of inclusion or are lead by cultural development.

The open-ended processes and focus on ethical relationships between the artist and collaborators bring an unprecedented pressure on the evaluation of art. Bishop’s concern is that the emphasis on ethical judgment overrides the autonomy and aesthetics of art. She calls for artists to retain their autonomy and aesthetics as political tools. Bishop questions the types of relations that are being produced, for whom, and why. She does not support Kester’s focus on the intersection between the aesthetic, the ethical and the tactical.

Bishop contends the binaries around ethical and moral judgment—such as ‘bad’ singular authorship versus ‘good’ collective authorship—have eclipsed socially engaged art from serious art criticism or aesthetic assessment. She champions more “antagonistic” approaches that maintain a critical distance, disrupt the viewer’s experience and maintain autonomy.

In *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* (2004) and *Artificial Hells* (2012) Bishop situates the current wave of socially engaged practices in the history of avant-garde, as a series of ongoing exertions to re-imagine art collectively. In times of political upheaval and movements for social change, artists are moved to rethink art’s relationship to politics and the social. She sees the collapse of communism in 1989 and the subsequent push towards neoliberalism, as impetus for artists to seek to represent alternative political visions and repair the social bond.

Bishop is critical of Kester’s commitment to the social bond and ethical processes that are judged on collaboration and override aesthetic production. In reinstating art’s autonomy and aesthetic value, Bishop aims to avoid art being understood as social work, which sets up a boundary around art that reinforces its separate-ness from real life that the historic avant-garde set out to dismantle. As Rancière (2009) identifies, prior to the mid-nineteenth century aesthetics were more interwoven with life, rather than rarified activities appreciated by the elite. For Bishop, artists such as Alÿs maintain a balance between the aesthetic and the social-political, rather than subsuming both within the social or activism (Bishop 2006c).

Bishop’s emphasis on the creation of socio-political spaces for art builds upon Mouffe’s model of an agonistic public sphere, developed in collaboration with Ernesto Laclau in their 1985 publication *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. For Mouffe, the public sphere is a battleground consisting of a multiplicity of conflicting stakeholders. She proposes a radical model where people do not “leave aside all their differences in order to try to reach a consensus. [It is] a sphere where an agonistic confrontation takes place” (2001, p. 123). Relations of conflict must be sustained, not erased (Kenning 2009).

Her model advocates ‘conflictual consensus’ among opponents who are not ‘enemies’ and agree to accept difference and embrace tension as part of an agonistic process.

Agonism signifies a clear break with a Habermasian model of consensus as the basic principle of modern democracy—it resists an idealised view of human sociability “moved by empathy and reciprocity” (Mouffe 2005, p. 30). “Consensus is no doubt necessary, but it must be accompanied by dissent” (Ibid. p. 31). Agonism provides a space for antagonistic relations between multiple conflicting parties that do not share common ground. In acknowledging there is no rational solution to their conflict, they do not achieve full identification with the group (Kenning 2009), but nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents (Mouffe 2005). Importantly, agonistic spaces differ from antagonistic spaces—they are not violent spaces, but support difference. Rather than threatening democracy, agonism “can keep democracy alive and impede the danger of extreme right-wing movements that could mobilise passions in an anti-democratic way” (Mouffe 2001, p. 124). Mouffe imagines reaching an order beyond hegemony—while liberal politics struggles for elite positions of power, and consensus weakens the ability to challenge it, agonism attempts to transform the relations of power by “questioning the dominant hegemony” (2005, p. 20).

Mouffe’s concept offers contemporary art a means to resist its collapse “into commodification and cooption, and return to its place as a viable site of radical critique” (Bissonette 2016). Like Bishop, Mouffe promotes the transformative potential of ‘discomfort’ in an audience’s experience of art, rather than social harmony. Relational art practices can adopt an agonistic perspective that accommodates a legitimate form of expression for conflict. While there are differences between Mouffe and Rancière’s perspectives, “they share an emphasis on disagreement as a constitutive aspect of democracy” (Ruitenbergh 2010, p. 41). For Rancière (2010), dissensus is productive—by fragmenting conventions that seem sensible, the rupture can open up new ways of experiencing social relations.

Mouffe's concept of agonism does not escape reproach from writers including Kester. Mouffe is criticised for presenting conflicts as abstract and distant from the demands of political practice and real life. Taming conflict presents a misleading perspective of societal transformation (Kester 2012). Violence-free agonism presents a questionable and fragile aspect of agonistic politics and overlooks notions of resentment and indecisiveness (Ince 2016). Agonistic politics relies heavily on theory and rationalism, even though it is critical of pure reason-based enlightenment attitudes (Ibid.). While Mouffe claims agonism creates a level playing field, she glosses over how different parties will agree to sit at the one table in the first place, and does not sufficiently address how hegemonic powers will be prevented from returning to dominate (Ibid.). As Mouffe discards the privileged position of the autonomous artist, she also disregards the significance of the artistic gesture. While she provides examples of artistic activism suited to agonism (such as The Yes Men), she fails to explain how unmasking and disruption would be meaningfully received (Kester 2012).

While Mouffe's and Bishop's provocations are heavily criticised, writers such as Martin (2007), Kwon (2002) and Kenning (2009) are equally skeptical of the assumed value of the open and convivial qualities in contemporary relational art. In his essay *Critique of Relational Aesthetics* (2007), Martin contends Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics is an idealistic "manifesto for a new political art confronting the service economies of informational capitalism—an art of the multitude" (p. 371). He maintains the recent wave of relational art is a symptom of artworld neoliberalism and fails to critique social exchange within capitalist culture. Participatory art succumbs to the commercial promotion of urban development and cultural tourism via museums, biennales and art fairs. He asks, "how does relational art's form of social exchange relate to the form of capitalist exchange?" (Ibid. p. 378).

Martin acknowledges that no system or individual is completely independent of capitalism's compulsion to commodify, nor is "removed from the law of profit" (Ibid. p. 371). Akin to Mouffe and Rancière, he asserts that artists are "bound to a political project of anti-capitalism [and to] a critique of the

dialectics of social exchange in capitalist culture” in order to overcome the alienation of social relations in art (Ibid. p. 386). As Kwon suggests in *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002), “[t]he internationally successful, studio-free, itinerant artist of today simply takes the place of the physical object itself, the lack of which necessitates the presence of the artist for the execution of the project” (p. 31). In this way the artist “approximate[s] the work and becomes the commodity, defined, in line with postindustrial production, as a service provider” (Ibid.). As Kenning argues in *Art Relations and the Presence of Absence* (2009), “[a]ll too often participation accrues to the artist and the social dimension becomes an aesthetic backdrop to a successful career” (p. 436). While participation can serve social concerns, it needs to acknowledge and confront its own relationship to the artworld.

Many of the pop-ups are intentionally positioned within two-way relationships with commerce. They investigate art’s relationship to capitalist exchange by resisting and embracing the value form. The commercial settings they take place in provide a symbolic and aesthetic backdrop, make a lively space for spontaneous interaction and exchange, and offer a means to mimic, highlight and critique a “lightness of being” (Stallabrass 2004).

Pop-Up Art’s exploratory approach to diverse socially engaged forms and methods has been heavily informed by significant theories put forward by the writers discussed in this chapter. As I discuss in relation to each artwork, the underlying concepts of disruption, conviviality, accessibility and agonistic space, put forward by Mouffe, Rancière, Brecht, Boal, Kester and Bishop, underpin the methods and approaches in the whole project. In practice, methods and approaches supported by one writer are adopted in artworks, and juxtaposed with alternate methods or approaches supported by another writer in other artworks—for example Kester and Bishop’s diverse approaches to conviviality and antagonism. The interlinked chain of artworks facilitate an examination of flexible models for performative and participatory artworks that seek to engage with real life issues and sustain a political and poetic aesthetic in their respective contexts.

Activating audiences

Many of the artworks created for *Pop-Up Art* use performance to activate participation with audiences situated in social spaces such as art fairs and city streets. They aim to connect with what Rancière refers to in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011) as an “unpredictable subject”. Rancière opposes the segregation of art and theatre—both sites and roles—and advocates a two-way interaction between artist and audience. The approach creates interplay between art and life and reduces the division Bishop seeks to uphold through the production of aesthetics. In establishing the autonomy of art, its form shapes life itself, rather than being elevated above or separate from real life. For Rancière, art has the ability to break down real social and political hierarchies—therefore the artist can activate audiences rendered passive by spectacles of the artworld and commerce. He argues:

What is required is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn ... where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs ... They will be shown a strange, unusual spectacle, a mystery whose meaning [they] must seek out ... For one, the spectator must be allowed some distance; for the other, he must forgo some distance ... Crossing borders and blurring the distribution of roles are defining characteristics of theatre and of contemporary art today, when all artistic competences stray from their own field and exchange places and powers with all others (Ibid. pp. 4-5, p. 12).

For Rancière, human beings contemplate in the spectacle the activity that they have been robbed of (Ibid.). He argues that through exchange, the gulf separating activity from passivity can be overcome. This disruption to the distance between artist and audience was essential to theatre directors Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal (1990). Brecht’s method of Epic theatre was enlivened with a social function—the theatre was not a place of entertainment, but a forum for political ideas inspiring reactions from audiences.

In a similar way, methods devised by Boal aimed to make spectators conscious of social situations, and therefore free themselves from at least their first oppression: that of being spectators (Boal 1990, p. 34; Rancière 2011, p. 8). One of his early methods in the 1960s was Newspaper theater—he and his colleagues would visit factories and churches and through the dramatisation of social issues, audiences were encouraged to participate in debates. Boal's techniques were designed to help the oppressed, raise consciousness and empower the working class. His subsequent innovation, *The Theatre of the Oppressed* (1998) fundamentally aimed to transform “spect-actors” into protagonists who rehearsed alternative actions that they could carry out in real life. It was designed as practical training in social resistance, or a rehearsal for a revolution where spectators would not be aware they were taking part in a performance.

Boal's theatre often took place covertly in sites such as restaurants and supermarkets. In one example, actors seated at different tables in a restaurant engaged in a dispute with a waiter about paying a bill. The main actor, who had no money, offered to pay for his meal with his own labour—by taking out the rubbish or doing the washing up. One by one the actors argue about the issue and draw other diners into a lively debate about the value of labour. Eventually someone collects money to pay for the bill, which offends some people and causes more disturbance. By transforming the restaurant into a public forum, the performance operates by stealth, unannounced to audiences as an artwork. “[It] turns the audience into active agents or performers and relies on their intervention for the work to unfold” (Bishop 2012a, p. 123). Boal states that within Invisible theatre the public act freely as if they are in a real situation. “The theatrical energy is completely liberated, and the impact produced by this free theatre is much more powerful and longer lasting” (Boal 1998, p. 126). By empowering the marginalised and oppressed, Boal sought to give them the means to find their own solutions to social and personal problems. For Boal, theatre functions as a rehearsal for social action that can lead to real political change. These live forums that recognise myriad conflicts bubbling under the surface are similar to the agonistic spaces Mouffe argues are necessary elements in a true democracy.



Fig. 7 Christoph Schlingensiefel, *Please love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week*, 2000



Fig. 8 Christoph Schlingensiefel, *Please love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week*, 2000

The political and real life methods of Boal are evident in contemporary art practice. From Christoph Schlingensiefel's reality TV-style performance *Please love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week* (2000) (see Fig. 7 and Fig. 8) in which the public were engaged in debates about 'asylum seekers' detained in a public square in Vienna, to Filip Noterdaeme's *Homeless Museum of Modern Art* (2002-) (see Fig. 26), a makeshift information desk where passersby can sit and converse face-to-face with its 'director' on the street in Chelsea, New York. Noterdaeme's conversational-style project subverts "the increasingly impersonal, market-driven artworld" (*Homeless Museum of Modern Art* 2007) and the artificial barriers that delineate artworld hierarchies.

These participatory methods have less in common with the long term, embedded, collaborative practices developed in consultation with communities advocated by Kester. They are not designed to create a space of consensus (Thompson 2012, p. 24). They lean toward the agonistic spaces of discord and contradiction that Mouffe and Bishop advocate. Inserted temporarily into social sites, the situations the artists create prompt audiences to reflect broadly on how they are "implicated in the movements of power" (Green 2008, p. 98). Santiago Sierra is a well known exemplar of this approach. He confronts gallery audiences "with various tableaux of exploitation and subordination" (Kester 2012, p. 7). Sierra's video *160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People* (2000), documents four prostitutes addicted to heroin who consent to be tattooed in exchange for a fix. Sierra's artwork is designed to produce shock as he "blows the whistle on the fraud that prevails in the history of emancipation" (Medina cited in Ibid.). For many artists this

kind of activation is a way to confront audiences with raw life issues, akin to an early avant-garde obsession “bent on the destruction of art as an institution separate from everyday life” (Kenning 2009, p. 435).

For Dada and Futurist artists, “[p]erformance was the surest means of disrupting a complacent public” (Goldberg 2012, p. 14). In their cabaret performances and soirées, Filippo Marinetti “suggested various tricks designed to infuriate an audience such as double booking seats in the auditorium and coating the seats with glue ... Booing assured the actor that the audience was alive, not simply blinded by ‘intellectual intoxication’” (Ibid. p. 16). Audiences may have expected to be entertained or have their ideas about art challenged, but the antics were intended to deliberately dislodge spectator complacency. This approach, however, did little to connect art to life and tended to alienate audiences.

In the 1950s and 60s artists such as Allan Kaprow and his contemporaries rejected the authority of the institution that had become immersed in the production of objects and commodities. Kaprow created unrehearsed environments and Happenings where audiences played a pivotal role in the realisation of the work. Situationist International also developed constructed situations to dissolve the spectacles that capitalism creates by employing experimental and unpredictable behaviour that jolted audience awareness. These artists facilitated interaction with audiences and props, recognising that spectators see, feel and understand just as artists and performers do, and recognised that every spectator is an actor (Rancière 2011).

Using Arnstein's *Ladder of [Citizen] Participation* (1969), Bishop (2012a) identifies a recent shift towards audience participation. Audiences who once may have been “placated”, “manipulated” or “involved” are replaced with keen “volunteers” who are disappointed if they are “excluded”. In her analysis of contemporary performance practices, theorist and historian Anne Marsh defines the shift as an “experience economy” where hordes of artists including Abramović recognise that “now is the time for performance art to be embraced by large numbers of people, not just the cognoscenti” (Marsh 2015, p. 22).

Pop-Up Art taps into this social zeitgeist by using performance to invite audience participation. It attempts to disrupt notions of participation in which audiences are preoccupied by spectacle (Rancière 2011). Audiences may be newspaper readers, art fair visitors or pedestrians on the street. At times the audiences may engage by observing, while at other times they are invited to participate in conversations or respond to a provocation. The intention is to open the work up to audiences and inspire critique around a topic. It is not a complete relinquishing of artistic authorship. Audience interaction becomes crucial in undoing the expectations of usual experiences in social space.

Social space

Pop-Up Art is positioned within discourses that consider the social, economic and political production of space. Research by Miwon Kwon (2000; 2005), Nato Thompson (2015), Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette (2004) and Claire Doherty (1990) provides an understanding of the mediation between commerce, everyday life and social order within public space and how artists can draw on the contradictory relationships and tensions within social space to produce creative artworks. The project intersects with Mouffe's (2005; 2007) notion of discursively constructed social spaces that can be productive—by revealing underlying tensions that are glossed over by consensus. It builds on Lefebvre's (1991; 2009) ideas that space is socially produced—society and every mode of production create social space and social time. Context and meaning are socially constructed and rely on an understanding of the social patterns, power relations, conflicts and habitus in social spaces.

According to Kwon, recent theories of the public sphere cast it as a site of varying types of competition and contestation, "itself fraught with social fragmentation, of *unequal* and exclusive access [and] 'competing communicative practices'" (2005, p. 71). Social space is continually homogenised, genericised and commodified to better accommodate the expansion of capitalism (Kwon 2000, p. 35). Corporate models and civic structure dictate codes of behaviour within public space. To Lefebvre (1991), social space is defined by contradictions between conceived, perceived and

lived experiences that are interconnected by commercial, urban and global processes. As public and private spaces become increasingly blended, definitions, meaning and relations within social space become more complex.

In his deliberation on socially engaged art that operates at the intersection of art and politics, Thompson (2015) argues the rise of the social in art coincides with the rapid gentrification of urban centres worldwide. In the current model of urban development, spatial production and cultural production inform one another—culture, art, activism and academicism aid the progress of a city. Thompson contends gentrification is an important battle of power—it reveals the redistribution, privatisation and regulation of public space. It is a war for alternative infrastructure that has the potential to produce alternative communities. This battle is multi-faceted for the artist who can coopt—and be coopted within the same contested territory.

As contemporary art practices oscillate between studios and social spaces (Doherty 1990), many artists create artistic interventions that expand, test and transform the social realm. Kwon argues artists have moved “beyond the inherited conception of site specific art as a grounded, fixed (even if ephemeral), singular event [towards a] notion of site as [a] multiply located, discursive field of operation” (2000, p. 33). As social space, site can be as various as a gallery, street corner, disenfranchised community, newspaper or virtual space. It is open to porous relations with the outside world and everyday life, blurring the art and non-art division (Kwon 2002). The meaning, relations and habitus of social spaces can be highlighted through the nomadic movement of the artist (and audience) who move from site to site and have temporary experiences of space.

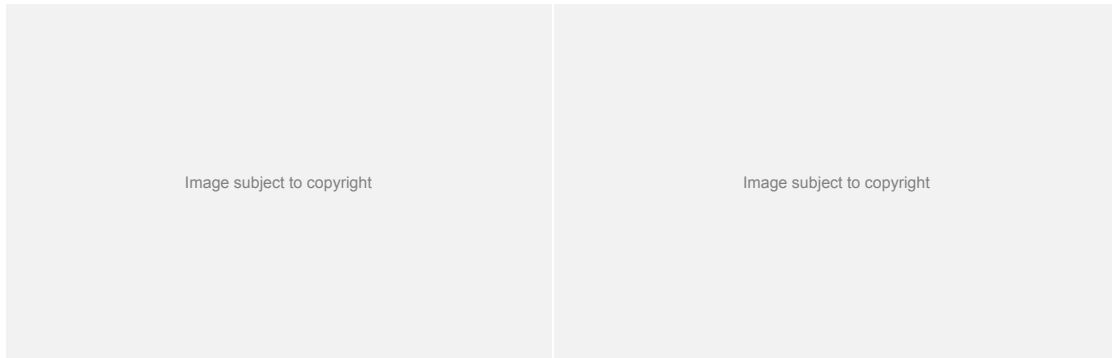


Fig. 9 Mierle Laderman-Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation*, 1977-80

Fig. 10 Jiří Kovanda, *Necklace*, 2007

Situationist International provide a model for such investigations of social space through detours that avoid civic mapping to reconfiguring messages on corporate billboards. Guy Dubord and the Situationists were determined to develop methods to challenge and reverse the trend of capitalism (Thompson and Sholett 2004). Their interventionist-style tactics trespassed into the territory of others and brought “to light the manipulative nature of the built environment and how strongly it is developed around notions of public and private” (Ibid. p. 24). While their tactics could also be viewed as drunken rambles, the *dérive* (a spontaneous journey through a site), *détourné* (the rearranging of popular sign-systems to make new meanings) and psycho-geography (being guided by individual instinct rather than commercial or civic routes) resist ‘regulated’ experiences of social space. Their actions challenge power by symbolically reclaiming site. Similar activations are reflected in the work of artists from the 1950s onwards including Mierle Laderman Ukeles (see Fig. 9) and Hans Haake, and are reflected in the work of more recent artists including Jiří Kovanda (see Fig. 10), Czerepok Hubert, Sarah Rodigari, Chim↑pom and the writer Will Self.

Site and situation-specific projects frequently harness methods such as participation, collaboration, contemplation and encounter. In her analysis of this shift, Doherty (1990) identifies neoliberalism as one driving force behind the expansion of these practices in social spaces. For example, commercial ventures such as biennales and art fairs—a focus of several of the PhD pop-ups discussed in Chapter four—readily open up their sites to social practices. This provides challenges for the artist who seeks to reverse the trend of

capitalism because these sites readily support artistic critique and use them as a method of attraction and spectacle. As a result, critique can be compromised and lose potency when it is segregated into an aesthetic and conceptual form, removed from real situations. Several of the pieces created for *Pop-Up Art* are intentionally positioned within sites where this challenge is confronted.

The PhD artworks occupy a range of artworld sites including a sculpture competition on a coastline, international art fairs, a conference and non-art sites such as a newspaper, city streets, marketplaces and pedestrian walkways. Sites are selected for their potential spontaneous interaction, social-political references and for their aesthetics. By intervening with these sites, the conventions that govern them are made more visible—such as the hierarchies of artworld players, the social patterns of audiences, or the regulations determining access to social spaces. In the following chapter I will discuss the methodologies that have informed my approach to creating pop-up style pieces in social spaces.

3 | PERFORMING DISRUPTION

Introduction

Pop-Up Art adopts a range of methods and approaches that examine performing disruption within a world of complex power relations. The methods equip the artist with practical and conceptual tools for operating within highly contested social spaces to interplay between art and life. The range of approaches employed while researching this project include: fieldwork (interviews, photographs, journal notes and exhibitions), theoretical research (reading, lectures and artist talks) and creating performative artworks (experiments and interventions). Framed by writing on contemporary performance art by RoseLee Goldberg (2011), Amelia Jones (1998; 1995), Shannon Jackson (2011), Suzanne Lacy (1995) and Anne Marsh (1993); strategies for public theatre by Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal; debates around antagonism and conviviality within socially engaged art practices by Claire Bishop (2012a), Grant Kester (2011) and Chantal Mouffe (2005); examinations of intervention tactics in art by Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette (2004); and relevant art practices by artists working in the field, this chapter provides a theoretical analysis of the methods and approaches applied to my own pop-up performances.

Within my art practice, performance and props are often used to activate participation. They work together to form temporary pop-up activities that engage with audiences in specific social spaces or situations. The pop-ups encompass a range of media and materials including costumes, painting, graphic design, photography, video and marketing paraphernalia. Many of the pop-ups are collaborations with other artists and commissioning bodies such as local councils, galleries and gallery dealers. The work created for *Pop-Up Art* has evolved as a series of separate but interconnected pieces enabling an exploration of multiple approaches to performance, participation, intervention, disruption and co-option across a variety of urban, regional, cultural and global sites.

The following sections in this chapter—performance, disruption, intervention and provocation, fact-o-fiction, the humour effect and performing surprise—identify the specific methods employed across the project. They interweave through all of the artworks and were uncovered through trial and error in a search for effectual approaches that ricochet between cooption and autonomy. The methods offer a distinct blend of appealing and disruptive approaches that invite participants to rethink social conventions. They constantly shift in-between fact and fiction, discursiveness and confrontation, and seriousness and humour. Each of these binaries has its own subtleties and function in relation to each other in terms of the operations of close-distance, but each piece tackles close-distance differently.

The method of humour, for example, is used to create a close-distance with organisers and participants. In *The Standard Special Lift-Out* it takes the form of mimicry and satire, in *Love is in the Fair* it takes the shape of parody. If one approach is absorbed into its site too easily, another approach is adopted in the work or in a subsequent piece. The methods of humour do not work alone, but in tandem with other elements that provoke emotive responses. Each method shifts and changes—it is not an indecisive approach—it is focused on maintaining friction. The decision to pull an artwork this way or that is intuitive—informed by theories by prominent writers (discussed in Chapter two), previous experiments conducted during the research, artworks by other artists, and the methods discussed in the following sections.

Performance

Pop-Up Art gleans from street activities, marketing practices and pop culture and is conceptually situated within the history of visual art performance and the history of theatre. The terrain of European and American performance practices from Futurism to the present is investigated by the writers; Goldberg (2011), Jones (1995; 1998), Jackson (2011), Lacy (1995) and Marsh (1993). Strategies for public theatre are offered by Brecht and Boal (1990; 1997). These writers provide a comprehensive background to performance methods that have spurred a momentum in contemporary performance practices from the 1990s to the present.

Performance within contemporary visual art

Goldberg (2011) attributes the origins of contemporary performance art in Euro-American culture to manifestations in late nineteenth-century cabaret and numerous art movements across Europe and North America such as Dada, Futurism, Surrealism, Russian Constructivism, Concrete art, 1960s Happenings and performance, the Situationist International and Fluxus practices and actionism, to the action art of Jackson Pollock and the composer of chance operations, John Cage. Goldberg argues that for many artists performance is a direct form of expression and conduit to an audience. At the heart of twentieth century performance are multiple motivations including a strong social critique of the human condition expressed through the body; an experience of time, space and material; explorations of processes from carefully scripted pieces to random experiments; and various relationships with audiences from private one on one on actions to group participation. Goldberg states, “performance was seen as reducing the element of alienation between performer and viewer—something that fitted well into the often leftist inspiration of the investigation of the function of art—since both audience and performer experienced the work simultaneously” (2011, p. 152). This approach goes some way to unsettling the divisions between those who make, curate or manage art, and those who experience it.

Early manifestations of performance often rejected the commodity by embracing the immaterial. Performance was intangible, it often relied on direct interaction or a singular event, it left no traces and it could not be bought and sold. Economic necessities made this approach short-lived (Ibid.) and twenty-first century performance art upturns some of the conventions of these earlier practices. The ideologies of anti-commodity and original, one-off performance pieces have been radically challenged by artists such as Marina Abramović and Tino Sehgal who have delivered consumable experiences into museums, biennales and fairs based on immaterial performances or the re-performing of live works. Their works have brought an understanding of the diversity of performance and participatory art to a general contemporary art audience (Baumgardner 2015).

Through re-performance the work can take on new meanings as it is represented in new contexts. Abramović and Sehgal have also embraced mass audience participation through intimate interactions such as Sehgal's conversation pieces (*These Associations* 2013) and Abramović's participatory pieces for Kaldor Projects (*Marina Abramović: Kaldor Projects* 2015). Essentially these works rely on liveness, and require the presence of the artist or performers in real time to initiate interaction with audiences. Goldberg argues, "[l]ive gestures are constantly used as a weapon against the conventions of established art" (2011, p. 7) and engagement with artists is as appealing as the contemplation of works of art.

In her examination of contemporary performance art practices, Marsh (1993; 2015) argues that as performance has been readily embraced by institutions such as museums, performances forfeit surprise and risk, an element that was crucial to avant-garde artists. As biennales, art fairs and museums embrace scripted performances and re-performances, they also make unpredictable performances, impromptu interventions and their audiences disappear. Marsh argues re-performance eschews avant-garde ideas based on ephemeral, experimental, one-off events. For traditionalists, performance art must maintain "its distance from theatre and any re-performance smacks of a scripted event" (2015, p. 21). The shift towards 'delegated performance' away from one-off works is complex. In a backflip, delegated performance critiques originality rather than critiquing the commodity market and the institution, and "the museum (once the enemy of the avant-garde) embraces the re-performance now made safe because there are no surprises and occupational health and safety measures can be checked beforehand" (ibid. p. 22). Instead of providing "an alternative to spectacular culture and everyday mediated environments" (Millner 2015, p. 7), performance art has done a full circle and returned to value market metrics. On the other hand, it can be argued that performance art has never been detached from commercial aspects, and that impromptu performances can traverse a multiplicity of contexts beyond the museum.

While these arguments situate performance art within the realms of visual art, the museum and the art market, Lacy (1995) clearly views performance art in the realms of public art and activism. Participatory and ephemeral art practices have been researched by Lacy not only through her writing in the 1990s but in her own art practice. Highly critical of public art and sculpture ‘plonked’ in public places that has little to do with the people who interact with it, Lacy defends “new genre public art”—process-based, ephemeral art that focuses on community based and politically engaged art. Lacy argues that this form of participatory practice evolved in reaction to modernism’s (failed) utopic project for better living, gender politics, racial politics and a better environment, and a dissatisfaction with the materialism and self-absorption of the artworld. This stimulated a shift towards ephemeral and temporal art practices. *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977), which Lacy created with Leslie Labowitz and a team of performers, a live performance was presented to the media offering an alternative interpretation of a series of rape cases in Los Angeles that included a feminist analysis of violence (Suzanne Lacy 2015, *In Mourning and in Rage*).

Lacy’s approach characterises the post-1990s momentum around performance practices that employs both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with audiences focusing on important and relevant social issues. Jackson’s (2011) definition of “interdependent performance” also emerges from a similar position of critique. Interdependent performance refers to ways in which a range of contemporary artists and theatre-makers dramatise their relationships with, and reliance on, supporting structures such as the networked dependencies of colleagues, curators, volunteer performers and participants, and beyond to the global social infrastructure itself. This approach to performance which foregrounds the relationship between the performer and audiences positions performers and audiences as “acting subjects” who exchange and “negotiate meaning” in real situations (Stiles 1998). The participatory art events that have evolved in contemporary art fairs and biennales evolve out of this type of performance art that engages with its audiences in order to complete its’ meaning.

Pop-Up Art's approach to performance does not adopt a fixed methodology. The performances are fluid and seek to be responsive and spontaneous through their interaction with other elements such as audiences, props, topical issues and sites. Some performances are created for art crowds while others are designed for general audiences on the street. The interplay between all these elements seeks to reduce the distance between general audiences and art. There are no set scripts, but loose scores and props are designed to trigger audience interaction in each performance, such as a set of questions, a survey, or a placard on a picket line. While method acting, and characters are not used as in conventional theatre, various identities are performed as roles such as a gallerist or a protestor.

The performances often depend on live, one-on-one encounters with participants. Audiences are often invited to participate through conversations. Because of the playful nature of some of the works, audiences often perform when they engage, becoming part of the work. Many of the performances attempt to create a surprise or a jolt in the audience's experience. While a concept for a work is predetermined, it is not closed, there is room for the participants to interpret the work and present diverse opinions about relevant issues. As Goldberg (2015) suggests, artists typically do not dictate how to look at a piece, or what it means, but hint at certain elements, leaving space for the viewer to determine its meaning.

Pop-Up Art sits closely with temporal practices that are performed from site to site. Some of the works are repeated in multiple social spaces—they are not remakes, but further explorations of the work in new contexts, with different audiences, with variable props, or are played over different time periods determined by an event or myself. The presentations utilise costumes and props borrowed from low-end marketing practices and street activities. For example, *Pursuit* (discussed in Chapter four) was presented within international art fairs and marketplaces. The numerous iterations in multiple sites was integral to the work as it echoed the ubiquity of the art fair circuit. Like the work of Sehgal, *Pursuit's* “constructed situations materialise temporarily, they insist on the framework of the art market and the museum”

(Van den Brand 2015, p. 9) and reveal an intricate connection to artworld institutions and cultural and economic capital. The continual re-performing of *Pursuit* enabled an exploration commissioned and non-commissioned intervention and diverse audience interaction.

Performance within theatre

Pop-Up Art utilises performative methods which have origins in Brecht and Boal's strategies for public theatre outlined in Chapter two. Brecht's method of Epic theatre, adopted from Chinese, Spanish and Elizabethan theatre, envisaged the theatre not as a place of entertainment, but as a forum for political ideas. He inspired reactions from audiences that were devised to enliven the theatre with a social function. Rather than fostering emotional connections (catharsis), he appealed to reason. His method the alienation-effect (*verfremdungseffekt*) produced a form of defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) in audiences. It provoked audiences "to question its preconceptions and look at the familiar in a new way—that is to make it strange" (Unwin 2012, p. 74). Brecht advocated specific techniques including, "coming out of a role or third person narration", "directly addressing audiences", "minimal sets, costumes and props" and contrasting "upbeat" humour and musical arrangements with "sinister or dark lyrics" (BBC 2015, Epic Theatre and Brecht).

Like Brecht's Epic theatre, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed abdicated artists as "exceptional" and aimed to help "oppressed spectators free themselves from at least their first oppression: that of being spectators" (Boal 1990, p. 34). Boal argued for a new relationship between audience and actors whereby spectators are reconfigured as spect-actors. "Everyone is involved, whether trained for it or not [and] everyone can, and should, take part" (Boal 1997, p. 33). By using covert performance that operates by surprise, it has the ability to agitate habitus in social spaces. Boal's methods are defended by Rancière (2012), who argues for lessening the divide between the audience and performer. According to Rancière, the task of artists is to activate audiences who are rendered passive by consumerism. He advocates "interaction should take place anywhere but in a theatre" (Ibid. p. 12). From his perspective

contemporary theatrical performance dismantles the traditional segregation of art from everyday activity, not solely in terms of sites and roles, but politically (2010). The models of human interaction favoured by Rancière and Boal relate to Mouffe's model of an agonistic space. They do not necessarily upturn hegemonic power structures, but they agitate the dispositions of passivity and exclusivity that hegemony depends on.

Informed by Brecht and Boal's blending of art and life, and Mouffe's concept of agonism, the pop-ups created for *Pop-Up Art* are designed to activate spectators in social spaces. The technique of activation can be liberating through its ability to temporarily unsettle the conventional reception of a site or situation. By mimicking social forms such as art-speed-dates or newspapers, the pop-up pieces create double-take experiences and may prompt conversations about art and topical issues. Some of the artworks operate between fiction (theatre) and real life, and seek to create discursive spaces for critique. The pieces use appealing styles of performance to appear benign, provocative, light or ambiguous and reveal political undertones upon deeper reflection. Like Boal's invisible method, the pop-ups begin with a 'surface' such as buying an artwork, but upon reflection they point to another issue, such as artworld hierarchies and habitus. In many of the pieces I shift roles. A conversation with a participant, for example, in *Ban the Biennale?* may combine the role of a protestor and an artist. In this way the fiction is made visible and allows the audience in on the joke. It also permits the audience to play along.

The notion of performativity, put forward by the philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler, is relevant here as she argues that identity is *constructed*. It is a 'fictional' performance. "Acts, gestures, enactments generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they ... express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (1999, p. 136). In *Pop-Up Art* I experiment with social status and power by taking on roles such as gallerists, news reporters and activists. As I discuss in Chapter four in the projects *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair*, participants also played with roles of power.

While Brecht and Boal's innovations were motivated by oppressive political regimes in Nazi Germany and Latin America respectively, the PhD work is propelled by social conventions (or *habitus*) that dictate particular roles, such as the separation between artist and dealer, or a general audience and the artworld. The methods operate in-between capitalist systems and regulated sites rather than seeking to destroy them from the outside.

Collaboration

Like theatre and film, performance art practices depend on positions of interdependence because of the collective processes required to produce the work. This observation by Jackson (2011) relates well to *Pop-Up Art* as the pieces are not solo creations. For example, *Triage*, *Over the Barricade* and *Love is in the Fair* were developed in collaboration with other artists. Projects such as *Pursuit* and *Attaché Case* relied on miniature artworks contributed by over 70 artists. *Over the Barricade* and *Love is in the Fair* coopted volunteer performers who were given roles as protestors or Love Vendors.

Some projects were developed in collaboration with commissioning bodies—*Pursuit* (*Art Wallah*) was initiated and supported by a commercial gallerist; *Attaché Case* was created with the assistance a curator at the Spanish Embassy; *The Standard Special Lift-Out* was devised in close consultation with a gallery curator, a newspaper editor and members of a regional community. Most pieces outsourced the assistance of tailors, writers, editors, graphic designers, carpenters, printers, photographers and videographers. These invisible layers to the production of the work entail brainstorming sessions, conversations and negotiations. Jackson's (2011) definition of "interdependent performance" relates well to *Pop-Up Art*. Support from multiple collaborators is indicative to performance art and has influenced the work processes, editing processes, and the final presentation of the work.

Props and costumes

Objects play a powerful role in movements for social change and political activism drives the design of props that defy standard definitions of art and design (Victoria and Albert Museum 2016, *Disobedient Objects*). In *Pop-Up Art* they include sandwich boards, protest placards, banners, briefcases, trolleys, tricycles, leaflets, badges, roses, customer surveys and placards. Many of these borrow from lo-fi street activities, protests and advertising. On their own, these props can be mundane, but as Stiles suggests the “relationality of props to an artist's action” (1998, p. 227) is integral to creating meaningful interreaction. Many of the pop-ups in this PhD adopt the DIY aesthetic familiar in low-end marketplaces and resist the generic, cool aesthetic of Apple, Starbucks and UniQlo. They replicate cheap advertising, throwaway newspapers, roaming vendor stalls, picket lines or roadside memorials.

The DIY aesthetic conveys a message of accessibility and immediacy. As I will discuss in Chapter six, Site and Situation, some audiences found the props in *Pop-Up Art* irritating and ugly. Like culture jamming—parodying advertising in order to critique it—some of the props blend to a site but they also unsettle it. They draw from advertising puns that provoke audiences to laugh at social patterns (habitus). For the art collective A Constructed World (1993-), lo-fi props resist the seriousness and permanence of the art museum. Their light approach offers a challenge to established power. The homemade aesthetic stresses a political autonomy independent of institutions or corporations. Its throwaway nature can, however, be counterproductive because it is easily disregarded. While the props in *Pop-Up Art* were designed to resist capitalism, in a Duchampian-style twist they also have lucrative appeal within the artworld. The hand painted protest placards and banners created for *Over the Barricade* were initially designed for a live performance, but they took on a poetic quality as a gallery installation after the event and audience members wanted to purchase them. The props for *Pursuit*, on the other hand, were designed as saleable artworks as part of a performance.



Costumes are often designed as an interface between the artist and the audience. When performers are in costume they serve an idea. John Flügel (1930), Butler (1990) and Jones (1995) argue that more than a mask, identity is performed through clothing and mannerisms. “While dress can be mobilised to contest or unfix gender, class, and ethnic distinctions, it can be and often is employed to reinforce—whether through opposition or ironic parody—conventional notions of difference” (Jones 1995, p. 30). Fraser’s docent suit worn in her performance *Museum Highlights* (1989), (discussed in previous chapter) reinforces conventions of professionalism and studiousness that incite audience trust. On the other hand, in Jacques Tati’s parody of a powerful businessman in the film *Playtime* (1967) (see Fig. 16), the suit carries signifiers of precision and conformity that can be easily crushed.

More flamboyant examples of costumes include Hugo Ball’s Dada suit worn at Cabaret Voltaire (1916) and later replicated in David Bowie’s music video *Man Who Owned The World* (1970); Ernesto Michahelles’ (aka Thayaht) Futurist ‘Tu Ta’ jumpsuit (1919); Vladimir Tatlin’s design for a utility coat (1923), Daniel Buren’s mobile artworks for *Sandwich Men* (1968) (see Fig. 12) based on street advertising (see Fig. 11); Valie Export’s wearable picture theatres *Tapp-und Tast-Kino* (1968-71) (see Fig. 13); Salvador Dali’s *Aphrodisiac Jacket* (1936) (see Fig. 14); The Art Guys suit project in which they sold advertising space on bespoke suits designed by Todd Oldham and wore them publicly for a year in a sculptural performance (1988-9); The Yes Men’s *Management Leisure Suit* and *Breakaway Business Suit* (2001); James

Rosenquist's *Paper Suit* (1966); Gene Pool's *Grass Suit* (1997-) Joseph Beuys' *Felt Suit* (1970), Ai Wei Wei's coat *Safe Sex* (1986), Mani Sriwanichpoom's *Pink Suit* (1997-) and Gilbert and George's everyday tweed suits (1970-).

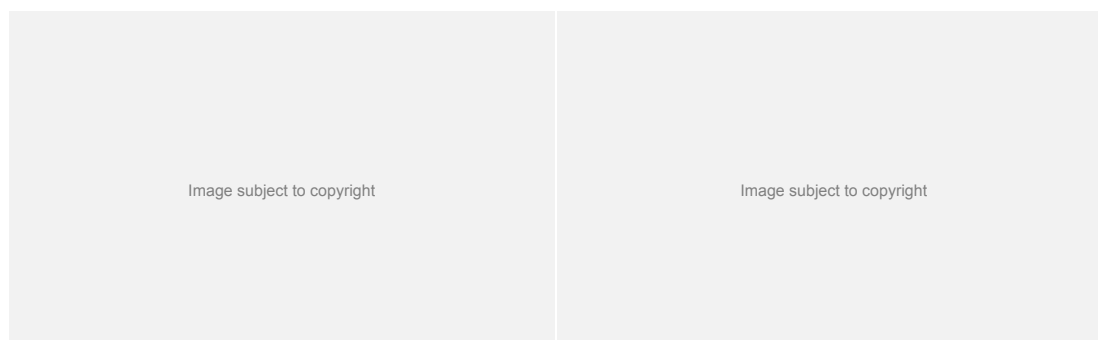


Fig. 15 Sesame Street, Ernie with Lefty the Salesman, *Would you like to buy an O?*, 1972

Fig. 16 Jacques Tati, *Playtime*, 1967

Like these artworks, the costumes created for the PhD project convey specific meanings, establish a dynamic between the artist and audience and are designed for specific sites and situations. The suits for *Pursuit* that were worn at art fairs, for example, were influenced by Lefty the Salesman's trench coat on *Sesame Street* (1969) (see Fig. 15) that in itself was a parody of shifty secondhand salesmen. The suits also conjure up the classic image of the serial flasher in the park. The suits created expectations about my role, but also confused signification for audiences. They can signify levels of power attached to the corporate world and the underworld. As Jones claims:

The ironic adoption of bourgeois or 'artistic' clothing can serve within particular contexts to revivify the very tropes of masculinity that have empowered male artists since the nineteenth-century bohemian or dandy/flaneur. What the clothed male artist's body means is contingent on its specific contexts of production and reception. The costumes are signifiers that are contextualized within different situations to subvert or reinforce anglo, middle-class masculinity's hegemonic claims to unified and empowered creative subjectivity and to the production of culture itself (1995, p. 30).

Akin to Boal's approach of Invisible theatre, the costumes created an artifice designed to blend in, but also stood out. Operating as fact-o-fiction, the costumes created a façade of authenticity and credibility that was subsequently subverted by humour as the fiction unfolded. They invited specific types of participation but also stimulated de-familiarisation. As I will elaborate in the following chapters, the costumes adopted in *Pop-Up Art* are designed to serve a specific idea in a location.

Pop-ups and commercial sites

Pop-Up Art draws from contemporary popular culture in order to investigate how the pop-up can be used to intervene contested social spaces of the street and the artworld. As Thomson argues, public spaces are increasingly regulated, privatised and gentrified (2004), artists can reclaim social space to circumvent the spectacle that consumer culture normally creates. With a focus on co-opting street based activities, *Pop-Up Art* analyses how creative interventions can momentarily disrupt the habitus of site. The unregulated pop-up is valuable as a form as it has the ability to temporarily intervene and blend into social spaces unannounced. It's aesthetic and sociability set up a dynamic that challenges the rules governing space. The regulated pop-up, although commissioned according to a set of conditions, can also challenge the rules through subversion. *Pop-Up Art* experiments with various types of impromptu and commissioned pop-ups that challenge conventional power relations in their various contexts. Underlying the interventions is the proposition that the hierarchies that govern social space should not be blindly accepted—as Rancière and Mouffe contend they should always be in question. The regulated and unregulated pop-ups in this project seek to assert a space of inclusiveness for debates and voices that are often marginalised. The ambiguity of the created pop-ups allows the work to traverse the complexity of commercial space and not conform to advertising or activism. While it could be argued that this approach compromises potency, the ambiguity is integral to finding an in-between space for art.



Fig. 17 *Breaking Up* Campaign, National Australia Bank, Melbourne, 2011



Fig. 18 *Breaking Up* Campaign, National Australia Bank, Melbourne, 2011

The synthesis between contemporary pop culture and art has never been more prevalent than in the current neoliberal climate (Stallabrass 2004). Throughout the twentieth century pop culture and art have continually informed one another and many practitioners from Andy Warhol to James Rosenquist and Jeff Koons have worked across these fields. Marina Abramović collaborated with FIFA World Cup and adidas to re-perform her 1978 endurance piece for a commercial titled *Work Relation* (2014) (Showstudio 2016, *adidas x Marina Abramović*). The advertisement could easily be viewed as an art video. In Melbourne and Sydney, the National Australia Bank hired actors to perform break-up songs on moving trailers in retail streets and perform lovers tiffs in bank foyers for its live advertising campaign *Breaking Up* (2011) (see Fig 17. and Fig. 18). In the same surprise campaign, bank tellers strapped to street poles called out to passersby that their competitors had taped them up because their interest rates were too low (Clemenger BBDO 2011). *Breaking Up* blended into social spaces of the city more so than media based advertising. At first glance it is difficult to discern if these examples operate as performances, promotions or both.

While advertising and art developed a strong alliance through surrealism, pop art and postmodernism, these recent examples signify an increased fluidity between contemporary performance art methods and socially engaged advertising. *Pop-Up Art* investigates—and celebrates—what can be gained from these blended relationships. By adopting the pop-up and other social forms found in pop-culture (newspapers, roaming salesmen, speed dating)

this project creates impromptu performances influenced by marketing and pop culture. The ambiguity they create is designed to provoke questions about the blended spaces of the artworld and the street.

During the research, a gamut of retail pop-ups were uncovered across various sites in Melbourne, New York, Tokyo, New Delhi, Singapore, Istanbul, Shanghai and Jinan where I have conducted fieldwork or participated in art residencies, art fairs, study tours or conferences. While the pop-up is a recent marketing phenomenon in Australia, in countries such as India and Japan, marketing practices that invite interaction are part of everyday street culture. The fieldwork uncovered social marketing strategies such as wearable sandwich boards, market researchers, mobile vendors, hawkers and installations such as roadside memorials. In many cases these practices were culturally specific such as the *kawaii* (cute) roaming vendors in Tokyo and chai wallahs in New Delhi. Other spruikers were more generic with links to retail chains. The fieldwork included conducting interviews with vendors and taking photographs. Local research was conducted in Melbourne where street preachers, protesters, charities, buskers and the homeless vie for space on retail strips to perform similar pop-up activities (Appendix iii).

In the past a pop-up may have been lo-fi activity, but more recently the term pop-up has proliferated as a high-end marketing strategy. Pop-ups are part of municipal strategies to reactivate neglected city spaces. From small scale, grassroots retail producers to large consumer chains, their growth reflects the unfettered privatisation of social space. Pop-up cafés, pop-up shops, pop-up gymnasiums and pop-up lectures can occupy a site for a year, a few hours or just a few minutes. They are now prevalent in shopping strips, train stations, airports, art festivals, parks and grungy ‘non-sites’ such as laneways or abandoned warehouses. In his analysis of the pop-up phenomenon, marketing director Phil Ore (2014) argues that more than an expansion of space, the pop-up is an extension of the brand experience, “it’s about being relevant, engaging with the public, about bringing people together”. In what Ore calls “local provocation” he argues the pop-up represents a “return” to “nostalgic” ideas of sociability. The pop-up is “context and people specific”

and part of “conviviality culture”—the twenty-first century’s interest in “engaging through fun and surprise”. As Chin-tau Wu identifies, it is not artists who are leading this creative charge. It is “the managerial class who make up enterprise culture: the unfettered privatisation of all public life and services” (cited in Thompson & Sholette 2004, p. 52).

The veneration of street stall culture in highly regulated cities such as New York, means that the distinction between legitimate and illegal pop-ups is less defined. Fashion brands such as Comme des Garçons have subverted urban spaces by imitating the appearance of rogue pop-up shops in grungy warehouses. In 2011, fashion label Kate Spade occupied a pink mobile cart on Union Square beside DIY ‘low-end’ vendors and tarot card readers. These DIY vendors encourage more social interaction than the pop-up chain stores and Barnes and Noble across the street. Although they appear spontaneous, many of these vendors require municipal permits and are linked to commercial enterprises (see Fig. 19 to Fig. 34).

In Union Square in 2011, a member of the Free Hugs campaign requested \$2 USD for a badge after I received a ‘free’ hug. On Canal Street, black market vendors are equally transient fixtures. Selling fake designer handbags from suitcases and garbage bags, these vendors and their wares disappear and reappear inside roller doorways and car vans at irregular intervals. Only metres from high-end galleries in Soho, numerous artists spruik their own work from pop-up shops and mobile galleries. It was there I encountered The Homeless Museum of Art (HOMU), a miniature pop-up desk manned by founder/director Filip Noterdame that “exists in a state of perpetual flux and continues to defy the rules of the established artworld” (HOMU 2007, Mission Statement). Nearby, another artist occupied a motorhome that was an all-in-one house, studio, gallery and shop. These non-regulated interventions into the street point to an itinerant artist—not the global artist travelling from biennale to biennale, but a ‘nomad culture’—enforced by high rental prices and an inflated economy.



Fig. 19 Mobile home/studio, Chelsea, New York, 2011



Fig. 20 New York's first vendor truck, New York, 2011



Fig. 21 Picket line, Central Park, New York, 2011



Fig. 22 Hot dog vendor, Midtown, New York, 2011



Fig. 23 Art vendor, Soho, New York, 2011



Fig. 24 Sideshow, Coney Island, New York, 2011



Fig. 25 Juice vendor, New Delhi, 2012



Fig. 26 Filip Noterdaeme, *Homeless Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 2011

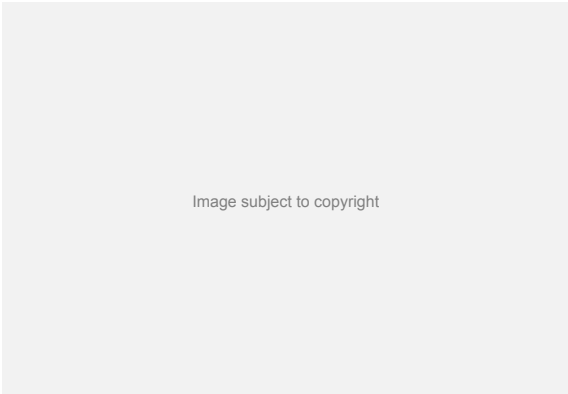


Fig. 27 Kate Spade vendor stall, Union Square, New York, 2011



Fig. 28 Gemstone vendor, Union Square, New York, 2011

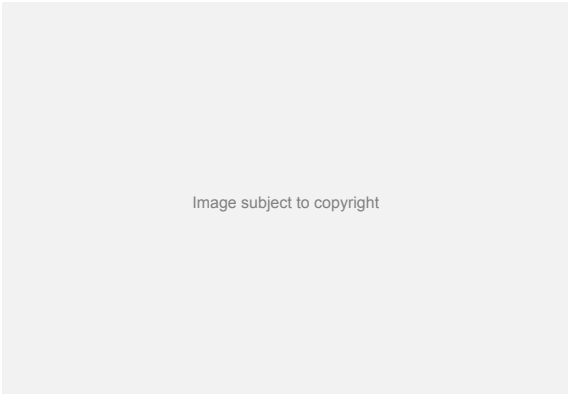


Fig. 29 Knick knack vendor, Brooklyn, New York, 2011



Fig. 30 Cake and shake vendor, MET, New York, 2011

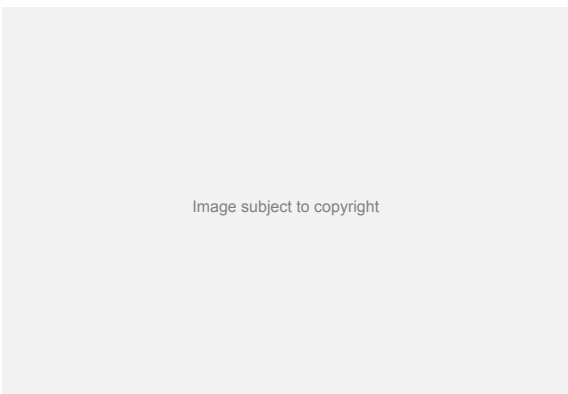


Fig. 31 'Gucci' and 'Chanel' handbag vendors, Canal Street, New York, 2011.



Fig. 32 Free hugs (Julian Mann), Sydney, 2004.

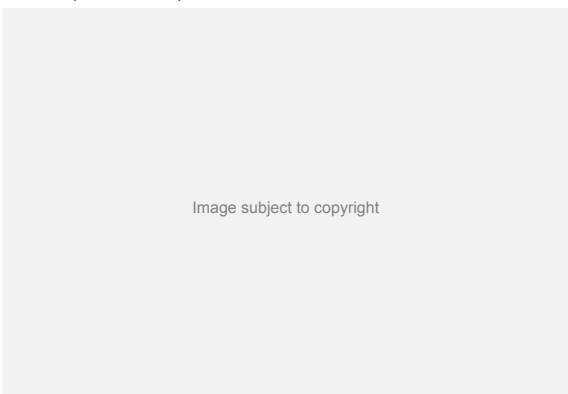


Fig. 33 Shoe shiner, Central Station, New York



Fig. 34 Homeless kittens vendor, Union Square, New York, 2011.

In Tokyo, cuddly kawaii characters roam station entrances and greet passersby. People hug the characters and their photos flood social media. While ultimately designed to attract customers to a corporation, these brand ambassadors have nothing apparent to sell and their spectacular tactics encourage humour and interaction. Other spruikers offer free tissue packs containing vouchers. These marketing strategies run parallel to an upsurge in the workings of activists such as Chim↑Pom in Tokyo and Improve Everywhere in New York. Operating under the banner of culture jamming, the collective Improve Everywhere organises a *No Pants Day* (2011-) in New York's subways. These interruptions to commuter's routines insert lively experiences into the everyday and their intentions are intentionally ambiguous.

Instead of resisting the popularising of culture, *Pop-Up Art* investigates what can be gained from blended relationships. Some of the marketing style pop-ups created for the PhD, such as *The Standard Special Lift-Out* and *Whaleburger*, intervene sites to collapse art into life and life into art. The blurred distinction between legitimate and illegal, high-end and low-end, fictional and factual, and cute and serious, has provided rich source material for designing my own pop-ups.

Intervention into public sites

These pop-up practices coincide with artists that move through, occupy or trespass social space. They include guerilla performances that use intervention and disruption such as Oleg Kulik who performed like a mad dog on all fours outside the Guelman Gallery in Moscow (*Mad Dog* 1994), Valie Export's mobile theatre (*Tapp und Tast Kino* 1968-1971) and The Yes Men who intercept sites such as conferences and collaborate with news channels, impersonating World Trade Organisation officials (*The Yes Men impersonate the WTO*, 2000). Other artists who interrupt the conventional reception of social spaces include Jiří Kovanda (see Fig. 35), Jason Maling (see Fig. 36), Academia Ruchu (see Fig. 37), Ben Cittadini, Bernhard Cella, Cinthia Marcel and many of the performative works created for *One Day Sculpture* (2008-9) directed by David Cross and the Litmus Research Initiative.

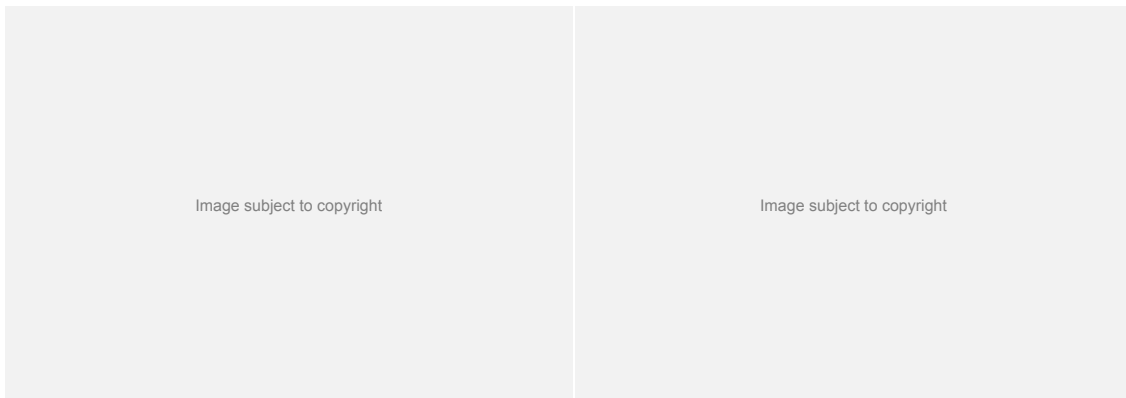


Fig. 35 Oleg Kulik, *Mad Dog*, 1994

Fig. 36 Jason Maling, *The Vorticist*, 2007-10

While intervention is a familiar form, as Bourdieu observes in *The Rules of Art* (1996), both commerce and art suffer from “a banalisation of the effect of debanalisation that they were once able to exercise” (p. 253). He calls it the wearing out of any effect that is designed to shock, surprise or intervene. “It is primarily the result of the routinisation of production that even avant-garde movements cannot escape ... and arises from the repeated application of proved procedures and the uninventive use of an art of inventing already invented. The first ones to be weary are those who are most exposed” (Ibid.). The malleable position of close-distance—which allows for constant shifting to create surprise, ambiguity and friction—goes some way to countering routine in social spaces.

Disruption, intervention and provocation

The pieces created for *Pop-Up Art* investigate convivial and uncomfortable methods of engagement that combine disruption, intervention and provocation. Disruption is a process of interrupting a normal course or activity, creating rupture, or throwing things into disorder. It operates by being ‘among’ or coming ‘between’; it interferes in the outcome or course of a condition or process to prevent harm or improve functioning (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2015). As an artistic method disruption provokes a reassessment of that which is taken for granted. “Art’s true domain of competence is not consensus, but dissensus: art succeeds best at disrupting received assumptions and challenging prejudice” (Twerdy 2012, p. 59).

Both Mouffe (2005; 2007) and Rancière (2010) argue that dissensus is emancipatory—it has the ability to disrupt what seems sensible and open up new ways of experiencing site and social relations. Mouffe’s proposal for an agonistic public sphere depends on disruption and “disagreement as a constitutive aspect of democracy” (Ruitenberg 2010, p. 41). In practice, however, art interventions which “interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, the audience, an institution or in the public domain” (Tate Glossary, *Art intervention*, 2015) do not necessarily create radical transformations or build new communities. Intervention is more likely to stir reactions and disrupt habitus. Provocation as a form of disruption and intervention stimulates or gives rise to an “unwelcome action or emotion” (Oxford Dictionary 2015), incites questions and stimulates alternatives. Working together, disruption, intervention and provocation unsettle the usual expectation of a site, and open up ways to consider how the relations in a site can be reimagined.

In their catalogue to the survey exhibition *The Interventionists—Art in the Social-Sphere* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004, curators Thompson and Sholette argue that interventionists utilise an assemblage of tactics such as humour, fiction, sleight of hand and high design “to interrupt a privatised and controlled visual world and bring socially imperative issues to the very feet of their audiences” (p. 46, p. 48). They describe the tactics of intervention as a set of tools “like a hammer, a glue gun or a screwdriver [used as a] means for building and deconstructing a given situation ... [They] are informed both by art and ... by a broad range of lived visual, spatial and cultural experiences” (Ibid.). Key to the interventionist sensibility is to understand how tactics gain meaning by operating within a game. The game is partly driven by rules and historical repetition (habitus) that often predicate established calls and responses.

The interventionist “operates in isolated actions, blow by blow” takes advantage of opportunities afforded by a particular occasion”, being without any base for stockpiling winnings, building up a position or planning raids.

“The tactic is the art of the weak ... the space of a tactic is the space of the other”, and the interventionist accepts “chance offerings of the moment” for “pulling tricks” and creating “surprises” “where it is least expected” (Ibid. p. 47). The interventionist takes on a subversive role by rebuking the “complacency, compartmentalisation, depersonalisation imposed by the contemporary social order” (Kester 2011, p. 21). Whether invited or impromptu, the tactics of the interventionist often work against *other* established social orders; they trespass the territory of a dominant system and seek to unsettle established modes of operation. The interventionist relies on the dominant system of the game in order to disrupt, defy or question power. Pablo Helguera (2007) critiques these conventions in his ‘artoons’. In *The Proposal* (2005) (see Fig. 38), his “visionary artist” does not even pretend to be autonomous from the forces of cultural and social capital. Helguera highlights the co-dependency of the artist and the institution for status, value and meaning in the artworld.



Fig. 37 Akademia Ruchu, Potknięcie 1 / Stumble 1 action, Świnoujście, 1976



Fig. 38 Pablo Helguera, *The Proposal*, 2005

Like Helguera’s visionary artist, the contemporary artworld is closely aligned with the forces of social, economic and cultural capital. As Thompson suggests, it is naïve to assume art interventions are always transformative and that the interventionist can destroy or change systems, no matter how hard they try or how much they may wish to. This is particularly so if the interventionist, like Helguera’s artist, operates in a complex, co-dependent relationship with or in close proximity to the *other* (who is arguably *the same*).

As history of the twentieth century avant-garde demonstrates, the artworld readily consumes everything in its path including its opponents and collaborators (Bürger 1974). Helguera's artist depends on the museum to maintain his currency and the museum requires artistic provocations to ensure its own relevancy. If Helguera's artist bombs the museum he will be without a place to exhibit and no longer have a target to attack. Therefore does Helguera's artist *really* want destroy art? His proposal is complicit with the system and reinforces the autonomy and status of the heroic artist. By collaborating with and manipulating the conventions and hierarchies of the institution he reinforces its value. The 'trick' for the contemporary artist is to negotiate this realm by working inter-dependently and collaboratively, in-between intervention and co-option. "The most interesting art ... fuses these two irreconcilable positions" (Alberro 2009, p. 3).

By adopting methods of intervention the artist can unsettle the underlying power relationships and conventions within the game through close-distance. Close-distance is a term I have devised to define artistic processes of collaboration, co-option and compromise that maintain critique as an important element of the work. If total opposition is a redundant position, then perhaps the artist can operate in-between. Intervention can derive meaning by adopting existing props and guises in social spaces to modify the rules of engagement. The interventionist can manipulate visual codes in a specific time and ... place to produce critical results, the codes are re-designed whether they are in the streets, on a billboard, on one's body, or in a classroom" (Thompson & Sholette 2004, p. 48).

One question investigated within this research is how the intent of the artist can remain intact within collaborative relationships with commercial organisations and institutions. For example, if the artist is (awkwardly) positioned in-between co-option and autonomy, is critique compromised? Provocation is not always made redundant when it is co-opted, but when the artist performing the provocation is co-opted the perception is that critique can lose its impact. Often total opposition is impossible, all art is co-opted to some degree and contemporary art absorbs this complex paradox.

As I discuss in chapters four and six in relation to two commissioned pieces, *Pursuit* (a guerilla gallerist) circumvented the commercial artworld by intervening in international art fairs. *Ban the Biennale?* was a protest by a lone protestor positioned within an art competition. Both pieces are complicit with the systems they attempted to critique. They play out positions of both powerlessness and power to unhinge patterns of behaviour. The disruption is staged—it proposes naïve positions of resistance to transform the artworld and the wider world. The failure of these heroic gestures is understood before the work is performed, and the live act is poetic. These pieces depend on a dominant system. They co-opt with commissioning bodies and aim to subvert from within at a close-distance. As Thompson and Sholette argue, tactics of intervention may be “small meanderings” which “do not add up to anything in particular” (2004, p. 46-49). They serve to unhinge or break the monotony of a well-known pattern (*habitus*). Unlike didactic or utilitarian approaches, intervention does not always require quantifiable results or a radical break to produce rupture. Its touch can be light, humourous and illusive. It can provoke rethinking and reimagining. Its power can also be misunderstood if it appears to resist traditional structures that create order or social harmony.

Both Kester (2011) and Bishop (2012a) acknowledge the power of provocation within art but continue to debate the methods and outcomes of socially engaged art. Kester favours convivial relations embedded in ethical community-centred practices, while Bishop champions more antagonistic approaches. The concept of opposition is an indispensable condition of democracy that Bishop and Mouffe (2005; 2007) argue should sustain (and not erase) relations of conflict. In order for healthy debates to occur, the individual must never achieve full identification within the group. The alternative is to suppress debate and discussion (*Ibid.*).

Akin to the tension created within Brecht’s Epic theatre, Bishop favours potentially divisive methods that provoke debate and critique the contradictions of power relations. She states provocation is a key tactic used by artists to incite a *secousse* (jolt) (Bishop 2012a) or what Barthes calls “punctum” (1980). Kester claims provocation is the “DNA of art” (2011, p. 38)

with a long history in avant-garde rhetoric as artists' prime motivation was to "challenge or destabilise normative bourgeois values" (p. 34). He argues contemporary audiences "expect provocation and savour disruption" (Ibid. p. 36). Together they reinforce a particular sense of identity among artworld viewers (as liberal minded risk takers) as they seek to discover something new. The familiar traditions of shock and disruption are anticipated by those who believe in the "intrinsically transgressive" and "liberatory power" of disruptive art. He sees the artist as "a symptomatic expression of this struggle" (Ibid. p. 21) seeking approval from an art audience with an appetite for provocation and demanding spectacles. Unlike Bishop, Kester is less interested the performative 'art experience'. Instead, he supports art's ability to facilitate 'good works' and build communities. For both the artist and the audience, the desire for provocative, live art forms can be a universal response to the confinement of an over regulated game. Artists continually devise and revise new forms of resistance, but as Bourdieu (1996) argues the effect of provocation easily wears out. Even radical protest can suffer from being redundant due to hype or overuse. Informed by these debates, *Pop-Up Art* seeks to find a flexible model for performative and participatory art practices that counters the 'wearing out of the effect'.

In the following chapters I investigate how audiences respond to commissioned and impromptu provocations that seamlessly blend into the regulated spaces of the artworld and the street and adopt convivial, prickly and humorous approaches to inciting interaction. These include one-on-one conversations, art-speed-dates, picket lines and marketing practices tailored for specific social spaces. A range of outcomes emerged: some pieces were not able to engage with audiences in a meaningful way as they were subsumed by other activity on the street, some pieces suffered from the wearing out of the effect, while others were able to generate critique. They drew attention to the degrees of distance required in socially engaged practices—how the artist cannot be completely autonomous, nor be completely co-opted. They demonstrated how tactics such as disruption, provocation and intervention can be used to create close-distance.

Fact-o-fiction

Fact-o-fiction—blending the real and the fabricated—invites reflection on the *constructed* nature of our surroundings. Replicating the seamless look and feel of high-end advertising, for example, has been the focus of several of my past projects—*Innocence*™ (2005) was a strategic advertising campaign on five billboards in Melbourne’s CBD marketing *HAPPINESS*™ (*Take it or fake it*), *INTEGRITY*™ (*It’s not for everyone*), *TRUST*™ (*Only Believe*) and other intangible products. Fiction, ambiguity and trompe-l’oeil are familiar tropes of artists, writers, filmmakers and comedians. Artifice is an essential ingredient in art publications such as Yves Klein’s *Dimanche—Le Journal d’un Seul Jour* (*Sunday—The Newspaper for Only One Day*) (1960) (see Fig. 39), The Yes Men’s *The New York Times Special Edition* (2008) (see Fig. 40), and in performance works such as Schlingensief’s *Please Love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week* (2000) (discussed in Chapter two).



Fig. 39 Paris newsstand selling Yves Klein’s *Dimanche—Le Journal d’un Seul Jour*, 1960



Fig. 40 The Yes Men, *The New York Times Special Edition*, 2008

Borrowing from art-vertising and culture-jamming this research project investigates ways marketplaces and the artworld can be temporarily hijacked by co-opting activities found in the street. By reconfiguring props, such as tabloids or pop-ups and reinserting them into everyday life, their usual function is momentarily suspended. While Bourriaud’s concept of relational art proposed to imagine “microtopias” (2002), fact-o-fiction creates temporary disruptions and situations in actual sites. Unlike Baudrillard’s concept of simulation (1981), fact-o-fiction does not attempt to produce something artificial to substitute reality. Instead it aims to intervene in, and posit questions about everyday reality. As Rancière (2011) suggests, art can go

some way towards undoing spectacles and helping us understand how words, images, stories and performances can change the world we live in (p. 23). Fact-o-fiction is one method that makes the construction of spectacles visible.

Fact-o-fiction differs from the act of lying exemplified in Aesop's fable *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* (1867) in which a shepherd boy amused himself by raising a false alarm. While the fable moralises that nobody believes a constant liar even if he/she is telling the truth, fact-o-fiction blurs reality with fiction in order to reveal truths. Fact-o-fiction relies on existing structures to operate within. It does not create entirely new structures. By blending in to real life it creates a copy that invites a reimagining of social forms. In the public domain, it can be a problem when truth and fiction are interchangeable, but fiction can also have positive effects (Parreno 2016). The confusion it creates can produce a reaction that activates the truth effect. As fact-o-fiction conceals and reveals, it may also have corrective effects. By tricking the eye and the mind, fiction creates ambiguity, friction, a jolt or a double-take. The mind of the viewer is quickened. Disbelief is temporarily suspended. For the contemporary artist fiction can act as a "rhetorical camouflage ... which opens the way for a greater understanding of genre and provide alternate realities" (Harrington 2012, p. 88).

By creating an edifice, fiction draws attention to its own construction and the construction of the world which it imitates. It invites audiences to question conventions and habitus in a similar way to Boal's method of Invisible theatre. Boal uses fiction to continually question truths. When asked whether blurring fact and fiction was "morally correct", Boal stated that "frankly, things played out are untrue", but he then asked, "what truth are we referring to?" (Boal & Epstein 1990, p. 33). Although Boal's actors play out scenarios in public places which are not "synchronized truth", they are in fact "diachronic truth"—truths that may not be happening in the here and now, but take place elsewhere at a different time. Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of his practice, Boal surmised that invisible meanings are important, "we were right ... we were doing what we had to do" (1990, p. 33).

Fact-o-fiction bears a relationship to parody by suspending disbelief. As “a complex multilayered type of imitation” which can include “a comic element”, parody draws “a connection between the original and the imitation (parody) that is deeper than surface repetition [often referred to as] ‘intertextuality’ [and] imitation plus ‘ironic inversion’” (Oxford Art 2015). Parody exploits the fine line between the ‘real’ and the ‘fake’ and creates a moment of doubt or ambivalence where an audience is forced to ‘read between the lines’ or is left ‘hanging’. In his research into news parody as a tool for political and cultural satire, Stephen Harrington contends “fake news” plays a critical role in “popular culture’s continual self-interrogation” (2012, p. 87). Fake news strips back the pretense that television news is “transparent” or “unmediated” and makes the viewer realise “the ideologically or politically aligned character of the perspective from which the television ‘eye’ surveys the world” (Turner cited in Harrington 2012, pp. 89-90).

In his writings around didacticism and ambiguity as diverse methods in socially engaged art, Thompson (2015) argues fiction can unsettle power relations and the sensible. He asserts the ambiguous gesture provides an in-between space for the imagination, the absurd and ideas that lie beyond didacticism. For Thompson, ambiguity offers the artist incredible freedom in a society that tends to teach and moralise. One example he cites is Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ billboard, *Untitled* (1991) consisting of a photograph of an empty, unmade bed. It jarred in its commercial site—audiences were agitated by the work (a subtle reference to the AIDS epidemic) because, in world that demands clear instructions, it had no clear message. Ambiguity, like truth and fiction, can offer an in-between space where art is not easily quashed by utilitarianism, commerce or activism. It can offer a space for questioning and the imagination. Of course, this does not mean the ambiguous gesture cannot be compromised—an array of conditions can reduce its potential. Striking a balance between avant-gardism, ambiguity, didacticism, fact and fiction requires toggling and sensitivity. Thompson asserts that a language needs to be developed to wrestle between ambiguity and broader infrastructures. Fact-o-fiction and close-distance go some way to creating that porous language.

Parody and fake news are often disregarded as irrelevant to real life and therefore less worthy, but fiction as a comedic device and as a social tool enables a deeper understanding of genre (Harrington 2012). News parody, for example, can help audiences to understand the devices used to construct 'real' news. Tabloid newspapers such as *The Onion* (1988-) aim to disclose the blasé nature of the news. In the PhD piece *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, the conventions of a real newspaper are mimicked for the purpose of drawing attention to habitus and the devices of persuasion. The fiction is revealed through the use of overblown facts and humour that allow readers in on the joke. As I will discuss in the following chapters, fact-o-fiction works in tandem with humour to critique real issues.

The humour effect

Humour is a key tactic in fact-o-fiction and plays a precarious role in disruption, intervention and provocation. Humour can be socially transformative, benefit physical and mental health, be corrective and reveal truths. It can also be condescending, pompous and anti-authoritarian. In his analysis of the adoption of humour as an attitude, Sigmund Freud argues, "[h]umour is not resigned, it is rebellious. It signifies not only the triumph of the ego but also of the pleasure principle, which is able ... to assert itself against the unkindness of the real circumstances" (1976, p. 163). Humour is a defence in its refusal to be distressed by reality or compelled to suffer. It has a liberating quality as it rises above conditions such as trauma that restricts and contains life.

In his research into the nature and function of humour and the relationship to wellbeing, psychologist Rod A Martin argues that humour "can be used for a number of serious functions extending into every aspect of social behaviour. It has an 'inherently ambiguous nature'" (2007, p. 150) due to the multiple roles it performs uniting or excluding people, violating or reinforcing social norms, and dominating over people or integrating oneself with others. Humour can be used to "reinforce stereotypes but also to shatter prejudices" (Ibid.).

Comedian David Woods (2013) identifies “contradictory thrusts” between being serious and funny which are essential to humour. He argues humour ideally has “soul”—a delicate balance of incongruity, relief and a mixture of pleasure and pain. Soul humour avoids toxicity (where one person's joke is another person's insult), sentimentality (humour that is only light or cute) and is not merely functional (funny) (Melbourne Conversations 2013). Humour can of course have a negative impact. In the process of creating laughter, it can produce an ‘outsmarting effect’ by making people into dupes as part of the joke or can reinforce stereotypes. As performance artist William Pope.L argues:

When comedy shifts from its proper focus, that is, against convention, the law, the uppity and the socially powerful, and turns its attack on the weaker and the oppressed, it keeps things the same and assists in maintaining the status quo (cited in Thompson and Sholette 2004, p. 101).

In Henri Bergson's (1901) research into the meaning of laughter produced by the comic, he argues humour corrects the overly rigid behaviour that has temporarily disturbed life's natural elasticity. Comedy serves society by identifying its antisocial tendencies. By laughing at our faults, we are able to correct them. He sees laughter as cerebral, comedy as human. For Bergson, the ability to retain an emotional distance and laugh at our situation serves a social function by assisting the human being to live in society and cope with rules and regulations. This research investigates how humour can go further and unsettle rigid conventions, question power and status and offer critique. Art critic Jim Schembri argues the reason comedians consistently inflame public debate is because their work is based on honesty and truth, “[c]omedy is where important conversations happen—the politically incorrect, so-wrong-but-right kind that help us progress as a society. Nothing changes until it is acknowledged” (cited in Bennett 2015). Critically, the method and context in which humour is delivered is vital to encouraging this conversation.

Revealing the invisible through humour was integral to Brecht’s Epic theatre. He employed *spass* (fun) to break rising tension and stop the audience from following characters on their emotional journey. Spass could take the form of a “comic song, slapstick or physical comedy or even a stand-up routine” (BBC 2015, Epic Theatre and Brecht). Silliness and poor taste were used to shock an audience or highlight the underlying pain of depression. The contrast may have made an audience laugh and then question why they laughed (Ibid.). Comedic methods from slapstick to gags and satire are employed by numerous artists including Laresa Kosloff (*CAST* 2011) (see Fig. 41), Brown Council (*One Hour Laugh* 2009) (see Fig. 42), Ronnie van Hout (*Ersatz (Complaining Man)* 2005) and Paul McCarthy (*The Painter* 1995). Like these examples, many of the PhD pieces use “humour that denatures art’s supposed ‘seriousness’” (Kenning 2009, p. 443).

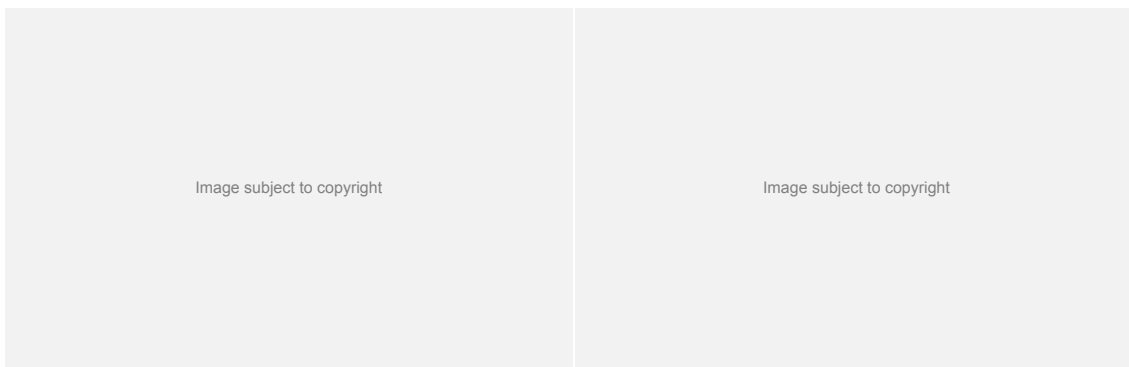


Fig. 41 Laresa Kosloff, *CAST*, 2011

Fig. 42 Brown Council, *One Hour Laugh*, 2009

Within *Pop-Up Art*, humour is context specific, shifting between conviviality and agitation, opening the way for social interactions. It aims to deliver two seemingly contradictory scripts—an overt playfulness and an underlying seriousness. The humour operates with disruption and provocation by stirring reactions and unsettling the usual reception of site. It adopts a fictitious and ambiguous nature that shifts between being anti-authoritarian, self-mocking, ironic and daggy. It produces a truth effect by revealing contradictions within social spaces. As analysed in Chapter five, the humour in some artworks proved to be counter productive, was disregarded as poking fun or perhaps reinforcing stereotypes.

The types of humour used in *Pop-Up Art* do not form one cohesive method. The humour has a deliberate emphasis on diversity. Each project activates a number of subsets of humour including irony, mimicry, satire, parody, slapstick, absurdity and farce. Tailored to specific sites and situations, the humour interplays between amusement and punch, agilely conflicting meaning. The humour is characterised by, but not limited to, these elements. They all have value, but they are not all used at once, nor are they all effective in a given site or situation. The elements are interchangeable and require a delicate balance so that the humour does not slip into ridicule or frivolity, or without a jolt. The right balance of humour is often arrived at through testing an audience's response. An approach may require adjustment in a live context or in the reiteration of a work. This may occur when the humour overtakes the critique, if the work is too serious, or the joke falls flat. Each *Pop-Up Art* piece therefore has its own vocabulary of humour offering distinctly different sensibilities and effects that can and engage audiences and challenge cultural orthodoxies. The humour can respond to a given site or situation by parodying its environment. It can blend in and break out of a convention within a site. The humour can embrace the complexity of a situation by making reference to its' contradictions. The chemistry of the humour relies on the inversion of signs and their meaning. That which is considered sensible can appear ridiculous, and the ridiculous, light or trivial can be loaded with profundity. The double-take experience the humour and fiction create produces a distance between appealing and disconcerting. It is a surprise disjuncture where the audience's attention is drawn to conventions that are invisible.

Pop-Up Art's reflexive register of humour is evident in the descriptions of the artworks and in the videos on the website. For example, in *Pursuit*, discussed in Chapter four, Activating Artworld Relations, the tone of the sales pitch and the humour varies according to each participant and venue. The humour is integral maintaining an agonistic mood in each interaction. While the projects raise issues that could be perceived as antagonistic, the humour has a tempering effect. The amalgam of shock and pleasure aims to incite self-reflexivity in participants.

Performing surprise

Just as Boal's performances occupied live situations, the pop-ups in this research project are often embedded in live sites and aim to perform surprise. They unfold as adaptive performances responding to situations and rely on an unpredictable encounter. The surprise shifts in each work when the work is commissioned or impromptu. This approach differs to the practice of 'scheduled' performances. Performing surprise proved challenging within this project given the regulated nature of social space and the ethical guidelines for conducting research in an academic institution.

The ethical guidelines shape much of the interaction in this project and have a dual effect on artistic output—while they aid the development of consent processes, they also limit the processes involved in creating and documenting artwork in public spaces. In practice the guidelines became complex, as they did not run parallel with what actually occurs in the public sphere where interaction is unpredictable. For example, while I instigate much of the interaction, people also approach the work out of curiosity, without being invited. On some occasions participants did not want to be photographed by an official photographer, but did opt to take their own 'selfies' and post them on social media. Some participants chose to consent to being photographed after interacting with the work, but not beforehand. In the current climate of citizen journalists, dash cam videographers, bloggers and tweeters, the general audience can freely publish their own photographs of events online. They are free from the ethics processes that oversee journalistic practice.

The ethics guidelines for university research candidates also differ from contemporary art practices. Some examples are: Sophie Calle's work *Suite Vénitienne* (1980-96) in which she follows and photographs strangers on the street without their knowledge, and Lucy Gunning's exploration of sub-cultures in the video *Esc* (2004) which covertly films drunk businessmen attempting to read the train schedules at Liverpool Station and Qigong practitioners during meditation sessions (Fortnum 2006).

In the *Pop-Up* pieces, it was possible to gain participant's consent for one-on-one photographs, but in open spaces it proved difficult to control who participated and appeared in the documentation. As a consequence it was not always possible to gain informed consent prior to participation and documentation as per the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007. Based on these guidelines the documentation could not be used and was destroyed. One approach I employed was to advise photographers not to record any recognisable features of participants during a performance. This proved relatively easy to achieve, but two photographers were critical of the approach. From their perspective, human moments—when a participant experienced surprise, smiled or laughed—were the interesting parts of the interaction, but were not captured. The dissertation therefore goes some way to explain omitted interactions.

The emphasis on ethics in socially engaged art practices can be at the expense of aesthetics (Bishop (2012a). In his essay, *An Ethics of Engagement: Collaborative Art Practices and the Return of the Ethnographer* (2009), Anthony Downey argues many contemporary collaborative practices are not equipped for these problems. While ethical processes go some way to support the artist, Downey asks, “do such practices result in engagement ... or ... commitment—on behalf of the viewer or further forms of dissociation and transference of responsibility? Can art, moreover, live up to such responsibilities in the first place?” (p. 593). In practice, some audience members were deterred by the formal consent process they were presented with because it was “too official”, “too bureaucratic”, “takes too much time” or contained “too much information”—comments from participants. Some participants were discouraged because the plain language statements and consent forms (Appendix i and ii) took longer to read than it did to participate in the work. In response to this criticism, I designed a less formal consent form bearing an illustration of a street vendor and rewrote the conditions in layman's terms—the form was rejected by the university ethics committee. This highlighted the importance of the ethics process, but also the increasing regulation of creative spaces that can sometimes negate surprise, experimentation and play as legitimate forms of learning and experience.

As writer Sarah Pink (2007) identified in her analysis of ethnographic research, the camera plays a role and becomes its own performer altering the conditions of a site and the interaction. Subjects tend to be more guarded in the presence of an artist or researcher, a camera and notebook, which can alter the purpose of the study where the researcher is seeking a truthful or authentic response. The issue is a delicate one as it not only impacts on the collation of accurate data, but also how participants will be presented and whether they feel empowered as objects of study (Pink 2007, pp. 11-24). At the same time, artistic and media interventions are common and people are increasingly aware that they may be filmed by citizen journalists at any given time in public space. Some audiences are prepared to “perform” (Butler 1999) for researchers, reporters, cameras and social media, and are often well rehearsed for such encounters.

Re-presenting performance

It is often assumed that performance “is staged primarily for an immediate audience and that any documentation is a secondary, supplementary record of an event that has its own prior integrity” (Auslander 2006, p. 6). Performance art commonly creates a double experience often anticipated by practitioners (Ward 2012). It is often produced with two audiences in mind: one audience experiences the work live, the other experiences the work afterwards, through photography, film, video, text, or by word of mouth through remembering and misremembering (Ibid.). Artist Chris Burden referred to these as primary and secondary experiences (cited in Ward 2012). Real life and real time actions were emphasised in early performance art and Happenings of the 1960s (Marsh 1993), and traditionalists often argue the live event is more authentic.

Today, live performance and participatory art practices are still unique vehicles for making direct unmediated access to the audience. They emphasise the presence of the artist, when nothing stands between spectator and performer (Jones 1997). Yet the desire for live performance could be perceived as outmoded, particularly as documented performance on the internet is the primary means by which it reaches a wide public (Tate Glossary

2015, Performance art). In this light, the detached viewing of documented performance seems counter to the concept of a live experience. On the one hand, ubiquitous documentation reinforces the live experience as intimate and rarified—but it also stresses how important documentation is as a mode of experience in itself.

Like land art and ephemeral sculpture, early performance art presented a challenge to the established institutions of the artworld (Marsh 1993). Early performance artists who documented their work with photography, and later with film and video, were well aware of performance's "dependence on documentation to attain symbolic status within the realm of culture" (Jones 1997, p. 13). Artists and institutions have devised methods for re-presenting performance, enabling them to be collected, viewed and sold. As noted earlier, Abramović's idea of doubleness extends her vision to the re-performance of artworks by other artists, and to the re-performance of her own works by trained performers and by audiences. As the extensive documentation accompanying *The Artist is Present* (2010) attests, photography, video and film are crucial modes for an audience to 'experience' a participatory work. Similarly, Sehgal has formulated his own intricate methods to market his performances through verbal contracts that permit re-performance, but prohibit any documentation. Both Sehgal and Abramović radically challenge traditional ideas of one-off performances. They exemplify practices that are clearly situated within the museum and visual art economies, and are carefully designed for re-experiences.

For the artist, documenting performance can raise issues about the translation of the live experience into a watchable piece such as the shift in meaning that occurs through the translation of form, the new ideas that collaborative processes bring, and how face-to-screen experience differs to face-to-face interaction. *Pop-Up Art* has also explored various approaches to documenting both performance and participation. In this sense, the documentation operates between the visual art tradition of reproducing works and the ethnographic tradition of capturing events, but does not replace the live experience.

The argument that documented performances rob an audience of a live experience is based “on the premise that one had to be there—in the flesh, as it were—to get the story right” (Jones 1997, p. 11). Yet whether an artist uses documentary evidence of previous actions, or offers clever reconstructions in galleries, the spirit of a work can still be conveyed (Jones 1997; Thompson 2004). Richard Long’s gallery installations, such as *Mud Circle* (2011), which document his ephemeral works in remote landscapes with video and photographs, do not replicate Long’s solitary experiences. As aesthetic constructions they assist audiences to imagine the artist’s experience of a previous site, and create a new experience in the present.

This is not the same for those who view photographs or video recordings of Abramović’s *The Artist is Present*. Audiences can conceptually understand the work and be moved emotionally, but the documentation does not create the same one-on-one encounter with the artist or another person. The personal revealing that occurs through intimacy is removed. Fraser is another artist who documents her live performances for presentation in photographs or video. *Little Frank and his Carp* (2001), covertly filmed in the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, conveys the artists’ experience in the site and records onlookers’ surprise as she caresses the architecture. Like Abramović’s piece, the documentation includes participants reactions to the performance, providing a layered experience for the secondary audience.

Presenting performance for examination

The artworks presented for the final examination of this project are representations of live performances archived on an online portal (website), *Pop-UpArt.com*. This dissertation examines the art making process and methods and explains gaps in the documentation. The documentation is constructed in a certain way to convey the live experience in an aesthetic form that compliments each performance. In the writing and documentation I have consolidated the work, but during the performances many confusing interactions occurred. At times, the documentation conveys the intent of the works more effectively than the live experiences did.

I explored several presentation formats during the PhD using video and props in gallery spaces at Youkobo Artspace, RMIT Project Space and the Immigration Museum (see ADR). The decision to represent the live performances using digital images and video on a website was a fundamental part of the research. The website reformulates for the viewer, in a logical manner, how a live work unfolds, the key aspects the interaction and the prominent props on display. It consolidates the scope of experimentation undertaken across the entire project. The project can be seen in its entirety—the numerous locations, diverse methods and alternate interactions with participants. By encapsulating the whole project, the breadth and malleability of close-distance is captured as it played out in each piece.

The logic behind the videos was to encapsulate the main aspects of each performance and to condense these into approximately five minutes of viewing time. Five minutes does not allow for long, duration footage. The videos are intended to provide a ‘quick grab’ of the work. The performances are not presented in real time. As representations they do not attempt to replace the live experience. The concept of a ‘quick grab’ was derived from the videographer who filmed and edited *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)*—she suggested overlaying the video, music and vox-pops much like mini-documentaries and life-style programs on commercial TV. This blended approach related well to the commercial nature of the pop-up and the sites in which it was performed. It enabled some control over the lightness and humour in the videos. It accentuated the space in-between commerce, art and politics that the project occupies. It also spoke to the accessibility of the work and the appealing, populist nature of *Pop-Up Art*.

The rationale behind the selection of photographs was to present the main elements of the projects. The images are not intended to be ‘finished’ artworks. The images and videos are ordered in the ADR and website according to the dissertation chapters. Within these, they are ordered as a project unfolds. The website and the videos have been created purely with the PhD examination in mind. Some of the videos, such as *Ban the Biennale?*, are stand alone pieces and could potentially be presented in a gallery space.

While a live performance or a gallery presentation could have been created for examination purposes, it may not have been able to convey the breadth and diversity of all the completed projects. The decision not to present a live work for examination was a way to avoid the complications of performing for an invited audience. The pop-ups are often designed for impromptu audiences who encounter them by surprise. The controlled conditions and timing requirements of a PhD examination do not accommodate this element easily. While many trials and tests were completed, the documentation of artworks on the website consists of select pieces that best represent the research outcomes. The rest of the research is contained in the ADR.

The first section of *Pop-UpArt.com* consists of documentation from several live events discussed in Chapter four, Activating Artworld Relations. The photographers and videographers attended these events for approximately three hours, though the events ran over several days. The images capture some of the atmosphere and the interaction, but do not focus on conversations, as I aim to explain them in the writing. As I have already discussed, the element of surprise was disturbed in some works, such as *Pursuit*, when it was introduced as an art project and cameras were present. In *Love is in the Fair*, cameras captured the participants meeting up, but did not follow them on their dates.

The second section consists of documentation from the pieces discussed in Chapter five, Fact-o-fiction. *The Standard Special Lift-Out* is documented using the text and images from the newspaper, but does not include any of the interviews conducted on the street. The *Whaleburger* pieces are documented with images and video. In real time, the live work was a long, drawn out experience with sporadic interaction. The edited version attempts to draw the interesting interactions and the commercial spaces together.

The third section features images and video related to the pieces in Chapter six, Site and Situation. The first work *Triage* was documented primarily with photographs. In the absence of cameras and costumes, audiences may have been less guarded and more reflective. In contrast, *Ban the Biennale?* and

Over the Barricade were captured with video and images. The format for the *Ban the Biennale?* and *Whaleburger* videos was influenced by lifestyle television programs. *Ban the Biennale?* includes an interviewer from *The Daily Review*. Although the interaction shifted the work, I opted to include this interaction as it added to, and reiterated the interplay between artworld, commerce and the media discussed throughout the dissertation. As Pink (2007) contends, the presence of the interviewer and the camera alters audiences' responses. Off camera, some audiences were critical of *Ban The Biennale?*, called it an "eyesore", and said it was a "not art". When the cameras were rolling, audiences were guarded and more reflective. When I was present with the interviewer and audience their comments even became complimentary. This made me reflect on how audiences responded across all the pop-ups, particularly as fact-o-fiction and humour are intended to facilitate genuine critique.

Pop-UpArt.com aims to bring together the disparate but interrelated performance and participatory pieces of this project. While the documentation in *Pop-UpArt.com* and the ADR represents the style of each performance, the documentation is clearly distinct from the live experience. The editing process has drawn out lateral narratives to make sense of the documentation, but often the live interaction was multilayered—many things occurred at once. The translation from real to recorded aims to capture the spirit of the pieces.

The methods of performance, disruption, intervention, provocation, fiction and humour discussed in this chapter provide a context for the approaches applied to the *Pop-Up Art* pieces. The reflexivity of the methods is necessary to maintaining a constant rub within sites that are subject to rapid flux and in conditions that seek to overtake the criticality of art. They are crucial to retaining the potency of poetics and politics that volatile performative artworks can emit. Ultimately, the combination of methods contributes to the attitude of close-distance in the contested social spaces in which the pieces take place. The methods facilitate being in-between. They enable toggling between entertainment, populism, conviviality, antagonism, altruism, aesthetics and activism. They allow for trial and error. The methods enable the projects to

hold a middle ground that side-steps absolute cooption and maintains criticality. Within the following chapters, Activating Artworld Relations, Fact-fiction and Site and Situation, the methods will be discussed in relation to particular pieces. They do not apply to every piece, but are used selectively as each work evolved.

4 | ACTIVATING ARTWORLD RELATIONS

Introduction

Informed by Augusto Boal's concept of Invisible theatre and the collapse of fixed roles between audience, actor and stage, Jacques Rancière's notion of the emancipated spectator (2011), and Chantal Mouffe's model for agonistic spaces (2005; 2007), this chapter focuses on a discussion of my artwork performed within the symbolic and material institutions of the artworld. *Pop-Up Art* investigates the artworld as a social space, a contested site comprising of social-political relations within galleries, art fairs and related exhibition spaces. It aims to examine how the artist can use creative disruption to question the structure of relations and relationships between artist, curator and audience. To do this I analyse two PhD pieces, *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair*, performed within international art fairs. In the first analysis, I examine how invited and impromptu interventions can be deployed to highlight the conventions and hierarchies of the contemporary artworld. In the second, I elaborate on how participatory pieces can reveal tensions around the shifting roles of the artist, curator and audience in contemporary art practice. In summary, I discuss how the performative artworks critique the social relations in dominant sites of the artworld and the position of close-distance required of the artist. While the artist may be immersed in, and supported by commercial enterprises, the artist can retain autonomy to critique its operations.

Art fairs typify the artworld's ecosystem of interconnected relationships (Becker 2008) and blurred roles (Rancière 2011). Jack Bankowsky claims contemporary Art Fair Art is predicated on the realisation that art stands in some critical or revealing relationship to the institutions to which it is bound, yet cannot do so from a "purifying distance from the point-of-purchase universe" (2005, p. 230). The fair acts as a point of friction where the "Art Fair Artist" penetrates commerce's inner sanctum, 'performs' the fair by donning the guise of the carnival shill, and in so doing defamiliarises the fair by making the usual mercantile, critical, and social exchanges strange and even magical" (Ibid.).

Pursuit (2012-13) and *Love is in the Fair* (2014), performed within art sites such as art fairs and galleries aimed to make visible the conventions, hierarchies and regulations that determine how the relationships in these social and material spaces are negotiated. *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* examine the potential of performative and participatory artwork to highlight the “personal, social, historical, political and economic relationships between individuals and ... institutions” (Frost 2015) that exist around the field of art. By momentarily disrupting participants’ usual engagement with the commercial artworld, they posit questions about established artworld conventions that are generally accepted as rules. Given that even participatory art practices are a well established convention in contemporary art, audiences who participate in the pieces are often aware of interventionist practices. By drawing attention to invisible conventions, *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* offer a tongue-in-cheek critique of artworld machinations by animating participants’ roles in the artworld.

Augusto Boal’s innovation in Invisible theatre (introduced in chapters two and three) relies on experimental forms of social theatre where “spectators see a show, without seeing it as a show” (Bishop 2012a, p. 65). Unlike traditional forms of theatre where an audience observes the action from a distance, Invisible theatre operates by stealth, unannounced to the public as a work of art. It is crucial, for example, that the actors do not (initially) reveal themselves to be actors. “On this rests the invisible nature of this form of theatre. And it is precisely this invisible quality that will make the spectator act freely and fully, as if he were in a real situation—and after all, it is a real situation” (Boal cited in Bishop 2012a, p. 122-123).

Invisible theatre uses reality as a set and real people (spectators) who become performers with the actors. It aims to educate the public to be more conscious of class difference and social injustice; and provides a forum for articulating dissent (Bishop 2012a). As Rancière argues, blurring the distribution of roles are the defining characteristics of the realms of theatre, comedy and contemporary art. It can enable art to exchange places and powers with all others (2011). This dynamic echoes Mouffe’s notion of

agonistic spaces that sustain discursive conflict in order to shift hegemonies. Like Invisible theatre, the pop-ups in this chapter rely on intervention and surprise to take effect. They operate from close-distance by blending into their settings, but as I will discuss, they create a “parodic spectacle” (Kenny 2009, p. 222). *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* utilise fact-o-fiction and humour to critique artworld relations. In these works I act as a key protagonist mediating between art and participants. I invite participants to play along with an activity related to the particular sites. The pop-ups use mimicry to blend in with their settings, but also stand out. As participants enter the work, they are prompted to consider artworld habitus—the value of art, the roles of dealers and curators, the accessibility of art sites—and their own positions as audience members and complicit participants within the artworld.

Pursuit

Pursuit is a series of performative interventions that mimic art dealership to create discursive critiques of artworld conventions. In this work I pose as a gallerist marketing miniature artworks concealed inside my suit jacket to the public. The piece emerged from an off-the-cuff experiment at the *Melbourne Art Fair* in 2010, which suggested a more significant exploration of the entrepreneurial nature of the artworld and mobile vendor practices could take place in this context. I recognised that there was more to discover through seeking blatant entrepreneurial situations with a range of art and non-art sites in a global context. *Pursuit* aimed to facilitate an exploration of how artworld status, power and identity can be performed through costume; how value is attributed to rarefied artworld objects; and how performance can animate and critique the roles of the artist, dealer and audience. It prompted my investigations into pop-ups that engage with audiences through hawking and intervention; and how social marketing ploys in the commercial world can be used to create discursive artworks within social spaces of the artworld and the street. I wanted to investigate to what extent *Pursuit*’s lo-fi ‘door-to-door’ sales technique could insert commentary into the international art fair circuit, by mimicking the paths of itinerant artists and dealers moving from one art fair to the next. As my impromptu and commissioned interventions intersected with global art sites and marketplaces, it revealed a range of responses that

prompted a deeper investigation into intervention, co-option and the regulation of public spaces. It uncovered that close-distance is integral to sustaining critique when an artist is immersed in commercial contexts such as art fairs. Close-distance provides an in-between space that is critically productive. It allows the art to rub against the systems that seek to absorb it into entertainment, commerce, social work and politics. While these systems can sustain the artist, close-distance keeps the necessary friction between cooption and autonomy alive. As the social conditions an artist operates within are in constant flux, close-distance provides a reflexive agitation. Close-distance enables the artist to shift between regulated and non-regulated, disruptive and convivial, fact and fiction, and playful and serious.

In 2012, *Pursuit* was tailored for the global art fair circuit as an international gallery marketing miniature artworks. The new outfit included a range of “white-collar props” (Jackson 2011, p. 177): a new, three-piece business suit with sliver lining, a leather briefcase, black socks fitted with side zip-pockets and a Hückel felt hat. An engraved ‘director’ nameplate was pinned to the jacket lapel, and a *Pursuit* suit tag reinforced the gallery as its own brand. The ensemble was lined with merchandise (miniature artworks) that could be revealed or concealed in a ‘flash’. The outfit with its secret interior was deliberately satirical. *Pursuit* replicated the professionalism of high-end, art fair dealers who have appeared in fashionable magazines (Johnson 2015), but it also mimicked less respectable, low-end professions such as 1950s door-to-door salesmen (Barnett 2012) and street hawkers.

Approximately 80 paintings, collages, photographs and assemblages by 25 real and fictional artists were exhibited in the suit at any one time. Between 2012 and 2013, 110 artists produced over 300 miniature artworks for presentations at 13 sites in art fairs, galleries and the street. Initially *Pursuit* was an impromptu (unofficial) intervention, but in later presentations it became a commissioned work. Overseas impromptu performances took place in India at the *Kochi Muziris Biennale*, Fort Kochin (2013) and two marketplaces in Khan Market, New Delhi (2013) and India Gate, New Delhi (2013). In Australia they took place at the *Melbourne Art Fair* (2012), the

National Gallery of Victoria (2013), The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2012), the *Biennale of Sydney* (2012) and Level 17 Artspace, Melbourne (2012). *Pursuit* was a commissioned work at the *India Art Fair*, New Delhi (2012 and 2013) (see Fig. 43), *ArtStage Singapore* (2013) (see Fig. 44), and the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Melbourne (2012).

A key aspect analysed in *Pursuit* is how access to site shapes participation and critique. Through a discussion of four of these performances, I will explain how impromptu and commissioned intervention revealed issues of power within art sites, and how the roles of the artworld are both fluid and fixed. As I will discuss, artists and audiences tended to support *Pursuit*, whereas dealers and curators were divided. One artist opted out of the work as her commercial gallery did not engage in co-dealerships and kept a distance itself from impromptu art interventions.



Fig. 43 Peter Burke, *Pursuit*, Indian Art Fair, 2013



Fig. 44 Peter Burke, *Pursuit*, Artstage Singapore, 2013
Photo: © ArtStage Singapore, 2017, <http://www.artstage.com>

Pursuit's interaction with art fair goers unfolds whilst they view dealer exhibits. They are approached with questions such as, “How are you enjoying the Fair?”, “See anything you like?” or “Are you looking for something for the home or office?”—which produce several responses. Some people are put off and say, “Who the hell are you?” Participants who are more polite or curious invariably ask where *Pursuit's* booth is located. As the artworks in the jacket are revealed, people react with surprise. It creates a secousse or jolt (Bishop 2012a, p. 236) in the viewer's experience, or what Barthes refers to as punctum—something that pricks, bruises or disturbs and changes the reading (1980).

Importantly, for most participants the double-take creates a release. It makes them stop, look, laugh and want to engage. The surprise disrupts the overwhelming, numbing effect of large expo events. The humour reduces the fear sometimes felt when approached by a stranger. Those perplexed by the surreptitious interaction turn away, while others inspect the lining of the jacket, examine the artworks and peek under the hat. *Pursuit* leads participants through a sales spiel, “Are you after an investment? Would you like to see a work by a mid-career artist, an emerging artist or someone established?” Shrewd investments, great bargains, prize winners, artists represented by prestigious galleries, recently reviewed artists, artists with burgeoning careers, artworks by famous artists, artworks by not-so-famous famous artists and artists with famous partners are all drawn to the buyer’s attention. These mysterious qualities are valuable “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1984). As Stallabrass identifies:

Both museums and galleries are committed to the mystification of the objects that they display, holding to the fiction of a distinct realm of high art that stands above the bureaucratised world of work and the complimentary vulgar blandishments of mass culture (2009, p. 7).

Masquerading as an artworld gatekeeper, *Pursuit* exploits the fictional qualities that make an artwork desirable and invites participants to bargain for a piece. Art Fair Art has always been at least as enthralled with the shop window as it is skeptical of its tyranny (Ibid.). *Pursuit* emphasises conventions the artworld holds by gently inverting them.

The entire transaction forces the viewer to consider social and relational value attached to the physical art object. Participants then become buyers who haggle, and their purchases are bagged with a pocketsize receipt, a catalogue and a complimentary *Pursuit* suit tag. Like a real gallerist, *Pursuit* takes a commission on each sale (\$2 AUD). The remaining amount (averaging \$20 AUD) goes to the artist (although some artists donated their income to the upkeep of the gallery). Although *Pursuit* focuses on sales, participants are interpreters of the work—an emancipated community of narrators and

translators (Rancière 2011, p. 22). As with all the pieces designed for *Pop-Up Art*, *Pursuit* is designed to provide an access point for general audiences. The critique accompanying the sales pitch is intended to invite audiences into a realm they may feel excluded from. It posits questions about participation in the artworld. The humour used throughout the interaction is both benign and provocative. It undoes the convention of cool-distance and exclusivity cultivated in many white-cube booths.

By confronting audiences with a series of questions about the value of art, *Pursuit* provokes a critique of the artworld—the interconnected relationships between individuals and institutions “that exist around the creation, exhibition and trade of art” (Frost 2015). This includes its gatekeepers—art consultants, writers, critics, curators, historians, academics, artists, journalists, collectors and audiences—who contribute to discourses that determine the value and meaning of art. Like Claes Oldenburg’s *The Store* (1960)—a rented New York storefront that sold artworks to the general public like any other product—*Pursuit* uses fact-o-fiction to appear to pander to the demands of art commodity consumption. Oldenburg was criticised by Peter Bürger (2010) who argued that *The Store* and other works in the post-1960s neo avant-garde were completely reliant on art institutions and the art market and remained uncritical of the systems and their own position within them. While *Pursuit* does rely on the *otherness* of institutions to maintain its alternative position, it pretends to play along with the commercial artworld as if selling is everything. It makes fun of its own ambiguous position. Using social and monetary exchange, Boal’s concept of Invisible theatre, and by creating live performative experiences, *Pursuit* moves between performance and real life. It is not solely a business transaction, a closed fictional work, parody or poetics. *Pursuit* offers critique—for those who are prepared to pay for it.

Ambiguity forms a part of *Pursuit*’s critique. A tension lies between what appears to be an affirmation of the commercial artworld, and at the same time, a critique of its machinations. This type of inversion is familiar in Jacques Derrida’s post-structuralist theory of deconstruction—a strategy for revealing hidden or invisible meanings in an artwork and where meanings are

reliant on other meanings. Constant shifts in positions open up meaning. Through a process Derrida (1982) refers to as *différance*, meaning is always 'differed' (deferred and/or different). As participants engage with *Pursuit* they uncover the complex contradictions and contested nature of the site. They are revealed through meanings, value and social relations attached to the sale of artwork.

As the director of *Pursuit*, I use my own name and shift between gallerist and artist, making participants aware of the critique. While the occasional participant may not realise the inversion, or is purely interested in purchasing a work, most participants are drawn into a humorous commentary of art fairs, hierarchy of galleries and dealers, status of art or the act of intervention. The humour in *Pursuit* is reflexive—it shifts from subtle to overt and varies between participants with varying degrees of success. During the conversation there is often an acknowledgement of the trick, joke or performance. There are multiple ways this is revealed—participants may overtly play along with the banter, “Oh yes, you really are loaded up with art!”, “You’re the real work of art!”, “Sure, you’re an art director and I’m a millionaire art collector!” They may move in and out of character, or wink signalling that they are in on the game. As the performer, I may use the same methods to ensure audiences are in on the ruse. The humour facilitates a revealing that ensures participants are not left feeling duped, which can alienate them. It seeks to create a way in to the intention behind the artwork—often only accessible to art’s gatekeepers.

While some fair goers are reluctant to engage with *Pursuit* because it appears ‘dodgy’ or illegal, others say they are drawn to the work’s ambiguity, liveness and the opportunity to participate. While “delegated”, commissioned performances are now commonplace in art institutions (*Melbourne Art Fair* 2014, *MAF Edge*), and the “conceptual traction [of Art Fair Art] is the very lifeblood that courses through art fair art’s veins” (Bankowsky 2015, p. 230), impromptu interventions are often disregarded as serious art. Most participants are initially unsure whether *Pursuit* is a ‘real’ gallerist, a commissioned artwork or an intervention. Two commonly asked questions by

participants are, “Have you got permission to be here?” and “Are you the artwork?” *Pursuit*’s position is intentionally ambiguous—it operates on the sidelines of the art fair akin to commercial pop-ups and has emerged out of a contemporary art context. As most people welcome *Pursuit*’s disruption to the commercial setting, it suggests audiences expect and want art to break the rules and challenge the status quo—particularly in the commercial realm of art fairs. As participants realise *Pursuit* is masquerading as an art dealer, their attention turns the legitimacy of the larger artworld and the construction of the fair. It creates doubt in its surface by demystifying the illusion of confidence projected by marketing. The doubt is designed to reduce the alienation and inaccessibility that high-end marketing events create.

Pursuit’s duplicity with art and commerce makes visible the ambivalent and contradictory position of the contemporary artist. As creative capital is dominated by economic capital, artists rely on the artworld for various types of support. Damien Hirst for example, wholeheartedly embraces this convention and manipulates the art market for his own profit. In 2008, he took his own work directly to auction at Sotheby’s bypassing dealers who traditionally introduce artists’ work to the marketplace (Da Costa 2008). On the other hand, Andrea Fraser’s museum performances articulate her personal ambivalence toward the artworld’s “social, institutional and economic structures and relationships” (Tate Modern 2008, *Andrea Fraser, Projection*). *Pursuit* operates in-between these two complex positions. It acknowledges there is no option but to confront art’s alliance with capitalism’s worship of the commodity and the commodity artist with “critical artistic practice” (Kwon 2002, p. 41).

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artists from Gustave Courbet in France to Tom Roberts in Australia, have rejected the institution’s dominance of art and opted to curate alternative exhibitions and take on the role of “guerilla gallerists” (Lawrence 2012). Courbet’s interest in ‘ordinary’ subject matter and his establishment of the *Pavillon du Réalisme* adjacent to the Universal Exposition in Paris (1855) resisted French Academy elitism.



Fig. 45 Banksy, *Pop-up stall*, New York, 2013



Fig. 46 Bernhard Cella, *What happens to the artist after the death of the curator?*, Venice Biennale, 2007

In 1979, The Stars group of artists, after being denied official exhibition space in the China Art Gallery in Beijing, and determined to open art up to the masses (rather than only intellectuals), displayed their artworks outside on the gallery's fence (1979). More recently, Ai Wei Wei's *Fuck Off* exhibition (2000) ran beside the *Third Shanghai Biennale* (2000). Other examples include *Not Fair* curated by Sam Leach, Tony Lloyd and Ashley Crawford (2010-2014) (an exhibition of 100 artists in a warehouse in response to the *Melbourne Art Fair*); Banksy's pop-up stall in New York's Central Park (2013) (see Fig. 45) which sold original works to passersby for \$60 USD; car boot sales manned by Tracey Emin, Gavin Turk and Peter Blake in London in 2015 (Neuendorf 2015); and Bernhard Cella's intervention *What happens to the artist after the death of the curator?* (2007-) (see Fig. 46) outside biennales and art fairs.

These pop-ups do not abandon the commercial artworld, but reorder conventional curatorial systems. They claim degrees of interdependence (from curatorial monopoly, an auction house, an art fair or commercial dealership). Arguably, these works simply repeat artworld conventions, but by maintaining a distance, they claim to be different by offering critique. Writer Elena Filipovic argues:

Courbet's example suggests the impulse among artists to take the organisation of exhibitions into their own hands already existed in the late nineteenth century, yet it was for the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century to further develop the potentials of the exhibition as medium. Artists such as Duchamp turned the act of choosing into new

paradigm of creative activity and treated the exhibition not only as a locale for the presentation of things, but also as a site of enquiry (Filipovic 2013, p. 5-8).

While Courbet detached himself from the institution, Duchamp's work holds an ambivalent position with regards to commodification, particularly with his multiple ready-mades. The dualistic and somewhat contradictory process is both criticised and fuelled by Duchamp who criticised the canonisation of art and its fetishisation of originality and uniqueness.

[I]n Neo-Dada they have taken my ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty (cited in Camfield 1989, p. 96).

Duchamp's attack on the art institution legitimised the value the artworld places on challenges to its own system. His attack on originality actually increased the aura of the reproduced work and also increased his status as an innovative artist. The absorption of these acts into the canon of art is a natural process within the convention of art discourse. The critique *Pursuit* marketed to art fair audiences also turned in on itself—it became a popular sideshow and an act of self-promotion. It revealed that *Pursuit* required a position of close-distance from promotion in its various commercial contexts to ensure it was not subsumed as a feel-good experience.

Between 2012-13 *Pursuit* interacted with various curators and directors—some saw the piece as a disturbance and others welcomed the intervention. At the 2012 *Melbourne Art Fair*, the director approached *Pursuit* and said, “I’ve heard about you, I’ve seen photos of you, and now I finally get to meet you! We love having you here. It’s all part of the entertainment”. The comment confirmed how readily periphery activities that pose no threat to business are accepted into the fair. For organisers, sideshow activities expand the promotion of the event, make it more diverse, and legitimise it as an ‘art’ event, making it worthy of attention. The director’s approval diminished the

thrill of intervention, but it did not necessarily lessen *Pursuit's* critique. It added another dimension to the conversations with audiences and did not reduce the fiction, humour and surprise.

Based on this official endorsement, *Pursuit* approached the *India Art Fair* and *ArtStage Singapore* to participate in their events. *India Art Fair* management initially rejected the piece as they mistook it for a business and feared it would upset dealers at the fair. An Indian accountant I consulted clarified the fact that the performance involved selling artworks for minimal amounts as part of the act. The international art circuit was an important step for *Pursuit* in replicating itinerant gallerists and artists who fly from city to city not unlike travelling showmen and door-to-door salesmen. The global economy of art and culture is also evidenced by the proliferation of galleries such as Gagolian Gallery located in multiple international cities (Green & Gardner 2014). While the *India Art Fair* represented a generic, global space with an international audience, it was located within a developing country with a rising middle class. As Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), in spite of imperialism, the benefits of cultural exchange can be mutual. While not on the scale of the Cricket World Cup, the Bollywood film industry or information technology, the fair is definitive of India's place in a globalised art economy and the expanding field of art in the Asia Pacific.

The media attention *Pursuit* received as part of the event impacted on the reception of the work. Many fair goers read about the pop-up in the local newspaper (see ADR) prior to experiencing it first hand, which reduced its surprise factor. Fair goers huddled in large groups, expecting to see a 'show'. As they took photographs the novelty produced a small spectacle and created problems for security staff. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the charisma of the artist can be used playfully to incite participation but it can also reduce a work to glibness, reinforcing the artist as hero, and limiting participants' roles to that of spectators. It can override more critical conversations that emerge from interaction. The artist can be expected to deliver spectacles rather than facilitate critique.

The interventionist and the dealer

Following the 2012 *India Art Fair*, *Pursuit* was approached by a commercial gallerist based in Delhi to sell Indian artists' work at the 2013 fair. Although I was initially reticent to work for a real dealer, it provided an opportunity to investigate how critique can function within an entrepreneurial relationship. Collaboration was one way to test the limits of co-option. By pushing against limits, the means constituted an opportunity and a restraint. Capitalising on *Pursuit's* marketing potential, the gallerist commissioned 200 miniature artworks by 22 well-known artists including Hema Upadhyay, Madhvi Parekh, Manisha Parekh, Raqs Media Collective and Thukral & Tagra. The gallerist anticipated a roaming art *wallah*—a term used in India to describe a shop owner or roaming vendor—would draw more buyers to his booth at the fair. As part of the deal, it was agreed the gallery and I would share the commission on each artwork sale and the remaining amount would go to the artist. The gallerist also provided accommodation and other in-kind support.

Initially the gallerist proposed that *Pursuit* don a traditional Indian *sherwani* suit for the event. Cultural translation and appropriation are considerations for contemporary artists who exhibit across multinational sites and work with ideas that are both local and global. On the one hand, wearing an Indian costume could be perceived as having a reverse colonisation effect, but on the other hand, coming from a country with a history of colonisation, it could be seen as cultural parody and a sign of disrespect. Although many Indian colleagues I consulted with suggested that the costume would appeal to audiences and be seen as sign of respect for their local culture, I decided to retain *Pursuit's* original suit (custom made in Delhi) because the suit-style is a ubiquitous symbol for business and a recognised brand for my pop-up gallery.

At previous fairs, buyers playfully bargained for the artworks. They chose to pay between \$2-122 AUD for an artwork. These prices were accessible to fair goers who normally may be excluded from buying art. In the collaboration with the Indian gallery, the prices were fixed between \$25-300 AUD. They were accessible to collectors but beyond the reach of general visitors.

As the video documentation accompanying this dissertation shows, the focus of the work shifted to spruiking. There were fewer conversations about the nature of the fair. While I was pleased with the interactions and the number of sales equalled the previous year when I had attended on my own, the gallery was disappointed that I had not sold all the work or drawn more people to his booth.

After the fair, *Pursuit* attempted to sell the remaining artwork at Khan Market and India Gate. In these sites among street vendors, locals and tourists, the work took on a different meaning. It accentuated the fiscal gap between art and everyday commodities. One passerby stated the cost of an artwork in the jacket equalled four months of his salary. While *Pursuit* was initially designed to create a levelling effect, in this context it did little more than create surprise and emphasise the gap between art and everyday living.

Undoubtedly the collaboration between the gallery and I put us in a double bind. We lent each other kudos—but we each had different goals. I felt this position diluted the focus of my piece. *Pursuit* was able to create surprise and discussion through impromptu conversations. It demonstrated that a collaboration of this nature does not necessarily cancel out the artist's intentions, but they can be overrun by another party's concerns.

On the occasions when *Pursuit* was commissioned, some participants encountering the work expressed disappointment that I had not gate-crashed the event—"It would be better if you were doing it without permission" (Appendix iii—d). The reactions highlighted how audiences expect and want art to break the rules and challenge the status quo, particularly in the regulated realm of art fairs. It also pointed out how the interventions are valued more if they are seen as unofficial or uninvited. This kind of response has evolved out of an understanding of twentieth century avant-garde art being anti-institutional. Although there is demonstrated ambivalence within the avant-garde (Wood & Gaiger 2003), the perception of artists being either totally for or against the institution remains.

Pursuit revealed the audience had an appetite for opposition and interventions that unsettled the art market they had paid to come and see. It uncovered romantic notions of authentic art experiences. As the artist, I also experienced ambivalent feelings of authenticity and illegitimacy. When commissioned, *Pursuit* seemed weak because it was complicit with the fair. When it intervened, the work seemed defiant because rules had been broken. Audience perceptions proved to be influential because they reinforced my own sense of authenticity or illegitimacy. Their reactions shifted the approach to close-distance that was taken in each location. The dialogue was constantly altered in the work to maintain a point of friction. As Mouffe (2001) suggests, friction is an essential ingredient for creating agonistic spaces where debates about power remain but differences are cast aside. Friction is not negative or threatening—it keeps democracy alive. Within the artworld, friction can facilitate debates that question its preoccupation with cooption, canonisation and fetishisation.

The interventionist and the curator

In another presentation of *Pursuit* at *Melbourne Now* (2013-4) in the National Gallery of Victoria in 2013, the tension between artistic autonomy and curatorship was further highlighted. As “opposed to the often-quoted binary of non-interaction” (Bishop 2012a, p. 86), the publicity leading up the exhibition celebrated “collaboration”, “intervention”, “community engagement” and “audience participation” (National Gallery of Victoria 2013-14, *Melbourne Now*: about the exhibition). Identifying with these tropes, *Pursuit* penned a letter to one of the curators requesting an invitation to the opening event. The curator did not reply but an exhibitor who supported the idea of intervention provided a free vernissage ticket. To launch *Pocket Melbourne Now* (2013), a new gallery for 70 artworks by 20 artists (see ADR) was designed inside a black, three-quarter length jacket—a contemporary cut evocative of trench coats worn by detectives or underworld characters in film noir. *Pursuit* spruiked the launch unhindered and the art crowd bargained hard for well-known artists’ works. The subsequent conversations employed humour to focus on the value attached to artists’ names and reputations.

Pursuit returned to the exhibition the following morning where the opening carnival was in full swing and open to the general public. Melbourne Now supported a spectacular fair atmosphere and entertained a smorgasbord of art practices, community activities and commercial ventures—local musicians, fashion parades, t-shirt printing and fingernail painting enlivened the gallery foyer. These activities, normally found on the street or in retail sites, overflowed into the sculpture garden where pop-up food trucks were parked alongside large sculptures. As *Pursuit* sought customers in the garden, a man introduced himself as one of the directors of the gallery. Instead of the usual Merlot and Camembert, he clutched a vanilla baby cone ice cream. He said, “I think you know this. You can’t do this here. If you want to do it, you have to go outside”. Although I was accustomed to random encounters, the expulsion took me by surprise. I obliged and learned later that Gallery protocol supports interactions between visitors and artists through a curated public art program, but not through impromptu interventions.

Perhaps the museum was an easy target that produced a predictable response. The tension between “internal struggles and external sanctions” (Bourdieu 1996, p. 252) is a familiar one in artistic fields where individual critique is overrun by institutional policies, programs and other responsibilities. For some critics “intervention [in galleries] raises questions about the very definition of art. Humour, subversion and playfulness are apparently only on the agenda if they get official approval from the contemporary establishment presided over” (The Daily Review 2013, *Melbourne Now*: picture gallery and podcast).

Conventionally, artworks are accepted into the canon of art after they have been recognised and presented by a curator (Smith 2012). While the definitions of art, as the prerogative of those in power, is universal and often subject to ridicule by artists (Silbergeld 1998), artists and curators continue to critique and undo the museum paradigm by proliferating alternatives and creating “open-ended connections” (Smith 2012, p. 179). Yet despite the populist charter of *Melbourne Now*, the response from the gallery highlighted a distance between artists and directors. It also marked a trend in curatorial

programs towards “delegated performance” over impromptu experimentation that was so critical to early performance practices (Marsh 2015). In the 1950s and 60s the Situationist International understood play and the subversion of roles in the urban environment as a “non-alienating human activity available to all” (Bishop 2012a, p. 86). Their emphasis on self-determination, instantaneity, rupture and immediacy countered pre-planned, repeatable events. Museums are not prepared for impromptu intervention or experimental practices that perform surprise.

One approach artists take in this context is to abandon these institutions and occupy artist-run spaces or alternative sites. Others integrate themselves into society at large by “producing socially and politically effective art” (Piper cited in Alberto 1983, p. 264). *Pursuit* aims to “bring about a shift in the situation, and bypass the traditional relationship between the work of art and the public” (Ibid. p. 91). It does this by working in-between these artworld sites and attempting to demystify its conventions from within. *Pursuit* does not aim to reinstate the autonomy of the artist, nor negate the curator. Instead it highlights the complex relations within the social spaces of art. In treading a fine line with commerce it reveals blended relationships and interchangeable roles that evolve out of co-option. As noted in Chapter one, the avant-garde of the early twentieth century resisted commerce, but the contemporary context is interconnected and supported by multiple, blended relationships. Complete opposition and distance is impossible. Instead of evading commerce, *Pursuit* positions itself in close proximity to, and in-between co-option and autonomy. As performer, artist, curator and entrepreneur *Pursuit* demonstrates that critique is possible through intervention and co-option. It reveals that co-option and compromise do not matter if the intentions of the art remain intact and the process reveals critique.

While it has been argued that the commodification of art, and the commoditisation of the artist as entrepreneur (signalled by Warhol), is the end of art as a form of critique (Han 2015), art that co-opts with commerce can be part of an artistic process. Process has the potential to reveal structures and conventions. As Kwon argues, “[c]ritical artistic practice is neither heroic nor

pathetic. There are no other options than to confront an ongoing predicament as a predicament” (2002, p. 41). The process of working alongside others can emphasise a position of close-distance. Situated in-between collaboration and compromise, it may seem like the “wrong place” but it is one way to face the challenges and contradictions of the “new orders of space and time” (Ibid.). *Pursuit* does not attempt to do away with the art market, nor be completely detached. Through close-distance it draws attention to the values and relations within the market system.

Love is in the Fair

A second art fair piece, *Love is in the Fair* (2014) aimed to enhance participant’s awareness of the conditions art is inscribed in (Van den Brand 2015). It parodied and demystified the social positioning within the artworld by inviting art fair goers to encounter each other in a new way via art-speed-dates. As Bourdieu argues, the field of arts within contemporary consumer society consists of structured hierarchies of power relations, competing with one another for valuable resources he defines as “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1984). Interconnected and dependent on one another, the roles of artworld players are not equal and possess degrees of agency. Arguably, artists are the most celebrated, collectors have maximum purchasing ability, audiences form crucial markets, and curators and dealers possess the greatest power (Smith 2012). Although the ‘social’ is a predominant turn in contemporary culture, many people are alienated by socially engaged artworks (Sehgal cited in Van den Brand 2015; Bishop 2005). This can occur when there is an uneven distribution of power and audiences are distanced from the work. By proposing new forms of transgression, artists obtain agency by questioning structures of power that are presented as norms (Bishop 2012a). Rather than offering social transformation, *Love is in the Fair* created temporary situations in which the value attributed to artworld relationships and roles was foregrounded.

Created in collaboration with artist Adele Varcoe, *Love is in the Fair* ran over five days at the *Melbourne Art Fair*. Unlike *Pursuit*’s impromptu appearance at the same event two years earlier, *Love is in the Fair* was a commissioned

pop-up for *Social Capital*, a program of five socially engaged artworks curated by Jacqueline Doughty. It developed ideas that emerged in *Pursuit*—such as highlighting the roles of artworld players. In *Love is in the Fair* we encouraged dates between dealers and artists. The centerpiece of *Love is in the Fair* was a giant heart shaped balloon floating above a mobile stand that posed the questions, “Would you like to date an artist or a dealer? Would you like to cuddle a curator or hug an art lover?” The stand was branded with a pink and white colour palette typical in kitsch romance advertising. It mimicked commercial pop-ups found in fairs, airport lounges and supermarkets. Varcoe and I collaborated on the concept, the costumes and props, and developed strategies to initiate audience interaction such as playful, opening lines and customer surveys. We acquired a team of assistants who enlisted daters and distributed fliers that read:

Want to wink at an artist, flirt with a dealer, cuddle a curator or date an art lover? We can help you find your perfect match* at the *Melbourne Art Fair*. This is how it works: we hook you up with a date**, you chat for 10 minutes, and the rest is up to you. No strings attached! Speak with one of our friendly Love Vendors today.

* We cater for all kinds of relationships in the artworld.

** No experience necessary.

The *Melbourne Art Fair*’s inclusion of *Social Capital* follows the rise of socially engaged and participatory works in international art fairs and biennales. Doughty’s title referenced Bourdieu’s cultural capital in which collective social and symbolic aspects of culture equate to a coveted and privileged currency. In his investigations of the history, display and transformation of art in contemporary global culture, Charles Green argues that large-scale events like art fairs are “irrevocably tied to the spectacle culture of neoliberalism” (The University of Melbourne 2015, Direct from Venice Biennale: Interview with Professor Charles Green).

As art fairs compete with biennales for audiences and profits, and as performance and participation have become increasingly marketable forms, they have adopted more ‘social’ programs. Bankowsky claims the spectacular and economic context of the art fair is integral to the meaning of an artwork and the artist’s gesture provides a point of friction. Ideally, the “‘Art Fair Artist’ penetrates commerce’s inner sanctum, ‘performs’ the fair by donning the guise of the carnival shill, and in so doing defamiliarises the fair by making the usual mercantile, critical, and social exchanges strange and even magical” (2005, p. 229-30). The artist cannot maintain a “purifying distance from the point-of-purchase universe” (Ibid.), but needs to be immersed in it. Pitched as a free customer service, *Love is in the Fair* highlighted social capital at work within the structure of the fair. Varcoe and I performed the role of matchmakers spruiking one-on-one art-speed-dates between the general public, gallery directors, fair management, security staff, curators, buyers and artists. In creating an aura of desire around an experience of these relations, their role in the commodity system was emphasised. *Love is in the Fair* did not necessarily create a discursive space as *Pursuit* had done, nor did it turn the social relations into commodities. It reworked the conventions from another perspective. In shifting the focus of the work to the participants, it accentuated the value attached to the relations. The rub against the commercial setting took effect as time and space in the fair was opened up for participants to experience an intimate moment in which the existing social structure was temporarily exposed.



Fig. 47 Pablo Helguera, *Ideal Social Choreography for an Artist at an Opening*, 2009



Fig. 48 Network Ten, *The Bachelor*, 2013

To prepare fair goers for their dates, they were instructed to complete a verbal questionnaire (see ADR) to point to the conceptual angle of the work. Light humour was used to make the initial interaction comfortable. We matched strangers based on the information provided and a pool of daters available at the time. We allowed mismatching to take place. They were formally introduced to each other, gifted with a single pink rose and sent off to show each other an artwork in the fair that they love. This somewhat predictable trope aimed to draw a parallel between ‘curated’ dating experiences and the social-choreography at art events (illustrated in Helguera’s satirical artoon, see Fig. 47) where artworld players may align themselves with those who may advance their position. When participants were introduced to their dates, a level playing field was momentarily created—but the interaction was left in the hands of the daters allowing space for participants to determine their own experience. Most dates lasted between 15-minutes to an hour, though two couples continued to date beyond the fair. The work does not claim to yield open-ended authorship to participants—the interaction acquired significance by drawing attention to the inescapable conditions and relations in the site.

Love is in the Fair was inspired by matchmaking services within contemporary popular culture such as eHarmony.com.au (2000-) and the reality television show *The Bachelor* (2014) (see Fig. 48). It borrowed a marketing-style artifice that blended into the carnivalesque atmosphere of the fair (see Fig. 49 and Fig. 50). At the same time, the work was glib, social kitsch. One artist at the fair claimed, “Your work is *too* theatrical”. Writers including Marsh (2015) are also critical of the fundamental theatricality of large-scale participatory works such as Abramović’s *The Artist is Present* (2010) that rely on the charisma of the artist. Varcoe and I had candidly exploited the fair’s theatrics and created a parodic spectacle to inspire participation. *Love is in the Fair* stood out from the setting, rather than disappearing as other pieces such as *The Standard Special Lift-Out* and *Whaleburger* (discussed in Chapter five) had done. On the one hand, *Love is in the Fair* amplified the artifice of the fair. On the other hand, it may have operated too closely to event culture to produce sufficient agitation.



Fig. 49 Peter Burke & Adele Varcoe, *Love is in the Fair*, Melbourne Art Fair, 2014

Photo: © Melbourne Art Fair & Tom Teutenberg



Fig. 50 Peter Burke & Adele Varcoe, *Love is in the Fair*, Melbourne Art Fair, 2014

Photo: © Melbourne Art Fair & Tom Teutenberg

Bishop contends “light” (2012a, p. 222) approaches prevalent in art since the 1980s mark a decisive break with more earnest forms of political art that tackle issues about “class, race, age, or gender” (Ibid.). Light methods have emerged through the sociability and populism of biennales and art fairs and social practice itself. In Claire Doherty’s essay *The New Situationists* (2004), she claims the development of large cultural events such as biennales and art fairs over the last 30 years has shaped art making processes, and the presentation and reception of art. The public’s experience has “developed from viewing to participation, giving rise to a marked shift in some instances, in the role of the artist from object maker to service provider” (Ibid. p. 9). Bankowsky claims art fairs are rude manifestations of the artworld that can be “‘performed’—as opposed to passively exploited ... or actively analysed such as institutional critique—there are inspired ‘performances’ and there are rote and merely one-dimensional ones” (2005, pp. 228-232). He is critical of artists who make art out of the fair and in a Möbius twist propel “their own ascension into brand namedom” (Ibid.). He argues the lack of depth and truth of what these artists perform demands urgent criticism. Yet as Bergson, Woods and Schembri argue, the lightness of humour can be deadly serious; it can unsettle rigid conventions, question power and status, and reveal truths in ways that oppositionary practices no longer have the ability to do. *Love is in the Fair’s* light approach operates as a rhetorical camouflage that seeks to counter the worn out effect.

The social relations *Love is in the Fair* highlighted took several trajectories. We found our event tested common perceptions about contemporary participatory artworks being ‘comfortable’, ‘pre-planned’ and ‘equal’. It offered participants an ‘art experience’—a live activity in which audiences became the work. Participants encountered the unpredictable; they understood they were going on a date, but the interaction involved surprise, risk and ‘realness’. They did not know whom they were going to date, what part of the artworld hierarchy their dater was from, nor how the interaction would unfold. Participants reported their dates shifted between being playful, serious, anxious and self-conscious. They described their experiences as “friendly”, “exciting” and “fun”, as well as “uncomfortable”, “awkward” and “creepy”. For some, the event was simply an “opportunity to chat about art with someone”, “a way to explore dating”, a way “to meet others”, or a chance “to meet influential people in the artworld”. Like *Pursuit*, the interaction was designed around the sociability of the art object, but as Doughty argues:

The invitation to connect is not only to create a feel good encounter. Behind the playful façade lies the potential to surprise, to disorient, to confound expectations and ultimately provoke thought ... to rethink the world as we know and accept it (2014, pp. 3-4).

Love is in the Fair materialised the social relations in the fair. Unlike *Pursuit*, it was difficult to tell exactly how participants absorbed the experience, if it evolved into a critique, or if the work missed the depth of infiltration. Some participants who were aware of the artworld structure used the dates to promote themselves. For example, two artists said they wanted to “meet curators who will give us a gig” and a gallerist wanted to “take people to his booth”. Similar encounters took place in *Pursuit*, where artists issued their business cards, and invited me to their studios with the prospect of exhibiting their work. These interactions illustrated the strings attached to social capital and how no one gives away anything for free (Han 2015). As Helguera and Bourdieu point out, social games are serious, and any investment in them is both economic and psychological (Bourdieu 1996, p. 13). Generally we abide by the behavioural codes of spaces without being aware of them.

Disrupting social patterns creates a temporary destabilisation and in a moment of “rupture, a space opens up for the viewer to decide whether to engage in the situation, stand back or move on” (Doughty 2014, pp. 3-4). In an art fair economy it is impossible to ignore the context of the material object and its commodity status, but it is more difficult to make visible the habitus of social relations. The amalgam of playful humour and spectacle in *Love is in the Fair* made participation appealing to fair goers. In retrospect, more agitation was needed as the work struggled to find an opposing edge because it blended in too easily with art fair culture.

Conclusion

Both *Love is in the Fair* and *Pursuit* invited participants to cross a threshold of seriousness within art fair spaces that enhanced their awareness of the conditions art is inscribed in. Rather than offering social transformation, these pieces prompted a series of questions: Why am I here? What role am I performing? What roles are others performing? Who has the most power? What is the value in this? These questions are central to Bourdieu’s analysis of the dynamics of power in society; the ways in which power is transferred and used to maintain social order or used to obtain more power. The questions are also essential to creating agonistic spaces that recognise the myriad tensions within social space.

Global events such as art fairs and biennales tend to be populist and linked to spectacle culture. *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* were located in a commodity culture where disruption carries market value. These two works highlight the value the artworld attaches to social relations and to subversion. Instead of resisting these conditions, *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* playfully mimic and manipulate them. They insist on the framework of the fair, the discourse that surrounds art and the expectations attached to the artworld. They insert degrees of critique into the site by operating from a close-distance. The effectiveness of the pop-ups varies from site to site, the performative and participatory nature of *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* demonstrate how live, temporary situations can employ fiction and humour to engage participants in critique.

These pop-ups do not transform artworld structures. They work through co-option and compromise to produce questions. They play along with the commercial and social aspects of the fairs, but keep degrees of distance from real business. At times the works drew too close to real selling or real dating. In these instances critique was lessened but it did not disappear. The effectiveness of *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* is not in any didactic message. Their resonance is in their ability to unsettle established routines and have a levelling effect. By gently inserting doubt, they highlight contradictions in the social space of art.

Pursuit and *Love is in the Fair* employed diverse methods. *Pursuit's* secretive, undercover approach was critical of artworld machinations, while *Love is in the Fair* embraced the fair spectacle and was complicit. The pieces revealed that in parodying or mimicking the forms of the art fair, some distance from the artworld system is required. One approach is to resist commercial artworld collaborations. Another approach is to take advantage of the opportunity to collaborate and work from within. While both approaches are valid, a prick or jolt in an audience's experience is necessary. The quickening it momentarily creates places a wedge between art, commerce and entertainment and inserts critique.

Other explorations of artworld sites will be investigated in Chapter six in relation to two pieces, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban the Biennale?*. In the following chapter, the use of fiction and humour will be investigated further as a method used to create a work in collaboration with an art gallery and a newspaper.

Introduction

This chapter of *Pop-Up Art* investigates how fiction and humour can be used within performative and participatory art practices as a means to break down social barriers and connect with audiences. Fiction and humour are important cultural practices evident in a range of forms including comedy, news media and art. They have a dual role to unsettle habitus and activate critique through poetic intervention. I examine this duality through three marketing-style pop-ups, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and *Please Love Me Whaleburger (Tokyo)*. These pieces are distinct in that they are not specifically directed at nor operate solely in artworld contexts. I analyse how the complex blend of fiction and humour in these productions was received by collaborators and audiences situated in diverse cultural and commercial contexts. I use these pieces to discuss how light approaches to fiction and humour can engage audiences, reveal conventions and power, and critique the surface of advertising and the media. I conclude that in order to be effective, fiction and humour need to function from a close-distance within participatory and collaborative situations. Fiction necessitates some space from the real world it replicates; humour needs to be attuned to its context; and in commercial collaborations, a distance is required to create punctum, or small jolts in consciousness.

Fiction

Pop-Up Art can be contextualised within the postmodern critique of truth and reality. For example, Peter Hill's *Museum of Contemporary Ideas* (2000) catalogues over 200 art projects which adopt 'superfiction' (visual art fictions) as a method to break down social conventions. Hill's project investigates what happens when illusion slips out of the picture frame and fiction escapes from the pages of the novel into the periphery of real life (Ibid. p.12). As a primary tool of the artist, fiction relies on contradiction in order to create meaning and reveal truths. In *Fiction and Art: Explorations in Contemporary Theory* (2015) Ananta Charan Sukla brings together a range of ideas and theories on fiction

as visualised forms of literature, performance and art. Sukla highlights fiction's relationship to reflection, doubt, truth and reality. Fiction has the ability to open up fictional worlds for our reflective engagement and has cognitive value through creating confusion and doubt. Sukla suggests this type of "false start" can expose "the truth value of fiction" (p. 4). Postmodern theorists claim truth is unfixed and constructed through multifarious and fragmented language games. For example, Jean-François Lyotard (1979) critiques the truth claims via grand meta narratives in western culture, and Jacques Derrida (1982) suggests that meaning is always "differed". In art, fiction and truth are often tied to notions of authorship, authenticity and 'the original'.

Fact-o-fiction

The role of fiction in theatrical performance is ideally a fusion of the fictional and the real (Nicholls cited in Sukla 2015). "Rather than being spectators of a world they are not in, the spectators see what is happening in the world. There is a tension between fiction and reality that is in the spectacle" (Ibid. p. 4). Performance art therefore can be simultaneously fictional and real and explore the tension between the two. Fact-o-fiction—the ambiguous blending of the real and the fabricated—relates closely to the real/unreal dynamic that is commonly played out within performance, art, advertising and the mass media. It is a method that invites participation and enquiry using verisimilitude. A simple example is a television advertisement that plays the sound of a telephone ring, prompting viewers to investigate whether it is their own phone that is ringing. On a deeper level, fact-o-fiction borrows from fiction by acting as a "rhetorical camouflage [that enables] a greater understanding of genre and provide[s] alternate realities" (Harrington 2012, p. 88). For example, *The Standard Special Lift-Out* created for *Pop-Up Art* (discussed below) mimics a tabloid newspaper. The bottom line is not to deceive, mislead or sell, but to insert questions (punctum) into the public realm.

Fact-o-fiction differs from direct methods of critique—it begins with a false start. It initiates disjuncture, ambivalence and doubt. It utilises the imagination, mimicry and play in situations where factual or serious approaches may suffer fatigue, banalisation or otherwise fail. In a backflip, it reveals something apart

from itself. In her examinations of parody, documentary and critique in re-imagining corporate organisations and institutions, Kate Kenny argues, “[i]n the process of imitation, the space between the original and its parodic reproduction can flag up important features of the original, even as it reverses and pokes fun at them. Parody can, therefore, have a critical function: it helps us to laugh at power and imagine alternatives” (2009, p. 221-2). Like Invisible theatre, fact-o-fiction inserts itself temporarily into real life. As it sits beside the real, it reveals conventions of the original that are often taken for granted.

Humour

Humour often works with fiction. The “essentially social nature of humour” (Martin 2007, p. 151) can be used to bring things out of the dark, comment on the absurdity of life, reveal the suppressed and expose falsity. “Laughter emerges in the realisation that all along the original was derived” (Butler 1999, p. 138). Humour can unite people, break down barriers and have a levelling effect. Satirists use humour to keep those in authority in-check and as a weapon against the abuse of power (Boyle 2013). Humour can backfire by reinforcing the stereotypes it seeks to critique, poking fun and by being misread. Beyond quick laughs, humourists can provoke audiences to question habitus—social norms, dispositions, prejudice, systems of power—and tackle ‘no go’ areas.

In his critique of political and cultural satire, Stephen Harrington argues “fake news” plays a critical role in “popular culture’s continual self-interrogation” (2012, p. 87). The disjuncture enables social behaviour to be viewed from a fresh perspective. In the act of duplication, the original is placed “beside itself” and the copy is used as a joke. “In this process, the bounds of the original become exposed. What seemed to be serious is shown as absurd, the powerful is shown to be vulnerable, the unchangeable contingent, the enchanting dangerous” (Hariman 2008, p. 251; Kenny 2009, p. 221). In parody, humour can reveal the fiction, and fiction can reveal humour. Without humour, fiction can fall flat. By connecting the humour with fiction, parody is “more than surface repetition [it creates] an imitation plus ‘ironic inversion’” (Oxford Art 2015).

Kenny argues that for humour and fiction to work together they must be funny and create a spectacle. The humour utilised in the pop-ups in this chapter alternates between mimicry, parody and farce. This register is designed to produce emotional responses and mini spectacles—familiar tropes in tabloid newspapers and advertising. The pop-ups seek to assert a space that is partly convivial and partly critical. The light humour is designed to prick, jolt or unsettle the audience's acceptance of the conventions of the news media.

Fiction, humour and art

Artists such as Sophie Calle, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña use fiction and humour to raise questions about the authenticity of documentation, history and authorship. Exhibitions such as *Authenticity...?* (2016), *Backflip: Humour and Feminism in Contemporary Art* (2013), *Laugh Out Loud* (2013), *Laughing in a Foreign Language* (2008) and *Noxious Laughing Gas* (2002) have explored ways artists have used fiction and humour to tackle controversial issues, question social conventions and push boundaries.

Informed by fiction and humour in contemporary art, popular culture, media pranks and performance, the pop-ups examined in this chapter rely on fact-o-fiction and humour to engage audiences in conversations about topical issues in two diverse cultural and commercial contexts. *The Standard Special Lift-Out* (2012) was conducted in Warrnambool, a regional district on the south coast of Victoria in Australia, and *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* (2013) and *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* were performed in the cities of Melbourne and Tokyo.

The Standard Special Lift-Out

In 2012 I was commissioned by the Warrnambool Art Gallery to make an artwork in collaboration with *The Standard*, a regional newspaper based in south west Victoria. A four-page fictional lift-out was produced for circulation with 13,000 copies of the real newspaper on Saturday 11 November. In the past I have made my own fact-o-fiction newspapers, headlines and billboards for public sites. In this media intervention, I wanted to examine how art could

be placed within an existing publication to provoke debate about topical issues and critique the construction of news, and how fiction and humour can connect with audiences in a social space.

The commission was part of *The Story So Far: 140 years of The Standard*, an exhibition celebrating the 140th anniversary of the Fairfax publication. It wed the gallery's commitment to community outreach with the newspaper's mission to engage with local organisations. When briefed on the project, the editor vented his frustration at the complacency and apathy in the community and proposed I produce something controversial that was going to make people sit up and take notice. On the one hand, his proposition was unusual because the newspaper—a blend of serious broadsheet articles and sensational tabloid stories—avoids spoof stories (particularly on April Fools' Day) as readers rely on the newspaper to deliver facts. On the other hand, speculation, distortions, omissions, provocations, fear mongering and jokes are daily tabloid fodder. Such tabloid practices came under scrutiny during the Leveson Inquiry (2012), a report into culture, practices and ethics of the British press. In acknowledging the vital role the press plays as a standard bearer and a guardian of public interests, Leveson stated:

It is not necessary or appropriate for the press always to be pursuing serious stories for it to be working in the public interest ... [The press functions] to inform, educate and entertain, and when doing so, to be irreverent, unruly and opinionated ... it explains complex concepts that matter in today's world in language that can be understood by everyone (p. 5).

Leveson uncovered that while chasing a good story, parts of the press acted as if their code of ethics (which they wrote) did not exist (Ibid. p. 6). Fiction was not used as a tool to encourage reflection and create meaning, but for more contrary means.



Fig. 51 Peter Burke, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, 2012



Fig. 52 Peter Burke, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, 2012

The Standard Special Lift-Out (see Fig. 51 and Fig. 52) can also be understood as part of the history of alternative publications that play crucial roles in disseminating unconventional opinions to broader audiences. These include Yves Klein's *Dimanche—Le Journal d'un Seul Jour*, a four-page broadsheet sold throughout Paris and at a conference on only one day featuring the manipulated photograph *Leap into the Void* (1960), Russian avant-garde zines, the farcical newspaper *The Onion* (1988-), Matthew Jones' hand rendered copy of *The New York Times* titled *Daily news on the day that became the Stonewall Riot* (1996), and The Yes Men's *The New York Times Special Edition* (2008). The Yes Men's broadsheet consisted of 80,000 replicas of the real paper distributed on the streets of New York bearing the fictional, front-page headline Iraq War Ends. The editors claimed the subversive intervention highlighted the blind acceptance of negative US governmental policies and inspired positive messages through best-case scenario news set nine months into the future. These newspapers play a crucial part in identifying habitus and open up possibilities for collective action.

The Standard Special Lift-Out was designed to parody tabloid style news and provoke readers to take notice. The curator signed off on the artwork, but the editor got cold feet and wanted to cancel the project. He felt the humour and fiction was "wacky"—it would create *too much* controversy and he wanted to avoid public fallout (Collins 2012). The curator and the editor reached a compromise. The work, which was initially intended to be a wrap around the outside of the paper had to be redesigned as an insert.

A disclaimer was also added to the inside cover (Appendix iv—a) that framed the work in a certain way, removing the critical element of fact-o-fiction that the work relied on for meaning. The publication was further delayed by the local council (which owns the gallery) during its election campaign—it was speculated that the publication would adversely affect public opinion. When it was finally published, it was buried in the centre of the newspaper between pages of advertising. Despite this, it generated comments via SMS and online (Appendix v—a, b) and the newspaper revelled in the controversy (See ADR: *The Standard Special Lift-Out*).

While the piece played on the slippage between fact and fiction in the tabloid domain, the co-dependent relationship between the newspaper, the gallery and the local council exposed tensions around creative provocation. This highlighted the way that art can be censored, redirected or manipulated by a coalition of the vested interests of the various parties involved. It also made visible challenges for the artist imposed by the passive consumer, censorship from a vocal minority, and political correctness on the part of commissioning bodies. These challenges raised fundamental questions driving my research about how the artist can critique the slippage between truth and fiction in the news media—how disruption can function within co-option and how effectual it can be. It also revealed tensions around fiction and humour—how they are context dependent and can be interpreted in multiple ways.

In developing the content for *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, I took on multiple roles as journalist, graphic designer and subject. I conducted conversational-style interviews with members of the community who informed the stories and the evaluation of the work. An ethnographic approach is one method I employ when investigating site. In the past I have interviewed street vendors and worked inside Bollywood painting studios to have first-hand encounters. The approach is not a parody of ethnographic approaches, but a primary form of artistic enquiry. In *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, the writing does however, parody sensational reporting familiar in tabloid productions that feed on spectacles. I also appeared in most of the photographs in *The Standard Special Lift-Out*—as a 21-year old drunken youth, a farmer whose mail was

eaten by a snail, and a woman in a Las Vegas pool with Prince Harry. They were styled on real news events at the time. Like the work of artists Cindy Sherman and Chris Lilley, the performative approach is an ongoing exploration of identity as a construction of multiple, diverse parts, and how power and identity (like fiction) are performed.

As part of the in-situ and ethnographic approach, I resided with a local family who identified topical issues they thought would spark readers' interest in my paper. These included football, road hoons, whale sightings and an undiscovered shipwreck. The gallery curator also introduced me to previous public art commissions in the town. One of these works was Euan Coates's bronze sculpture *Three Pillars of Instant Gratification*, depicting three comic animal busts devouring pies, pasties and sausage rolls. It met with controversy when it was installed in Warrnambool's main street in 2010. The artwork was damaged by "moronic vandals" (Weaver and Neal 2010), but after its restoration the public who initially disliked the work responded positively. Like *Triage* discussed in Chapter six, it demonstrated how attachment occurs when site is contested.

Based on the research in the town, fictional news stories and advertisements were developed for *The Standard Special Lift-Out*. The articles included a disputed shipwreck uncovered by youths doing burnouts on the beach, a new public art commission for the main street, a proposal to rename the town, a new 'round' football, and a delicious whaleburger. They mimicked the dramatic, authoritative and contradictory style of tabloid newspapers. The light approach to topical issues aimed to reveal how news is constructed through a blend of fact and fiction. Unlike serious methods of critique, fact-o-fiction and humour offered a light approach to reflecting on how in the tabloid realm small news is big news and history is constructed through stories, memory, rumour and myth (Barthes 1957). The editor overlooked the critique and thought the approach would offend readers. When it was decided that a disclaimer would accompany the paper, artist peers were outraged. They declared it undermined the artist's intent and advised I abandon the project. I felt that compromise in this instance was not necessarily a negative, but simply a

process. Allowing collusion to take place could be revealing. It could open up a space where the tensions could be explored. In her examination of agonistic spaces, Mouffe (2007) asserts that art that stimulates dissensus can make visible what consensus tends to obscure. The negotiations with the newspaper and gallery uncovered the power relations within collaborative processes. When the artwork was moved to the inside of the tabloid—instead of the cover—and lost its intended fact-o-fictional edge, it highlighted the political dynamics that stage-manage visibility in the space of a newspaper.

Given the wildfire nature of unregulated social media, the disclaimer that the editor attached to the work was not unreasonable, but it framed the work as entertainment and art, rather than allowing it to blend in with real life. In declaring the fiction, it disabled the Invisible theatre and the functionality of fact-o-fiction. While it ensured members of the public were not duped, given the exaggerated nature of the content it is unlikely the public would have taken the content seriously. The editor suggested the work made fun of the community, but made no mention of the free reign fiction and humour present in real tabloids. Equally frustrated by the process of two highly political organisations collaborating on a controversial publication for a compromised result, the gallery saw no point in disputing the newspaper and wanted to maintain the integrity of the artwork. The printing was postponed and the exhibition proceeded without the tabloid.

When the artwork was finally published inside *The Saturday Standard*, the front page was given over to a local business story, “Saved! Discount Store Gets a New Lease of Life!”. I conducted interviews with pedestrians in the main street to gather responses to the fictional artwork. Most people did not approve of the work, even though some had not fully read it. “It was a wise decision for the editor to place a disclaimer in the paper ... [The paper] should be responsible and stick to the facts”, “It’s too real and would have caused fuss and confusion”, “I just assumed the articles were factual”. One person who did enjoy the fictional aspect said the disclaimer ruined her experience, “No, I’m not going to believe it’s not real. I want it to be true. I was so happy thinking it was all true. Warrnambool is so boring. It needs livening up”.

Several people criticised the work, “I can understand how artists might use the media format, but it’s only going to make more sales for the paper. You sold out”. Others stated it was “a waste of money” and “funding to the artist should be cut”.

In contrast to the conversations on the street, the SMS messages and comments *The Standard* received were brief, playful and quip (See ADR: *The Standard Special Lift-Out*). The smallest and most ordinary article A town called Mahogany? which proposed renaming the city, proved to be the most controversial:

Change Warrnambool's name? What rubbish. Just because some illiterates can't handle words of more than one syllable. Talk about pandering to the lowest common denominator by some Johnny-come-lately. How much ratepayers' money would be wasted on this crackpot idea?—Agnes

How ridiculous to seek to change the town's name, we live in Warrnambool fools; calling it 'Warnie' or 'the Bool' are terms of endearment for a home town, that's all, it is an indigenous name meaning where two rivers meet the sea and a unforgivable insult to consider changing it—Insulted

How ridiculous!! You can call Warrnambool what you like ... I will still call this city WARRNAMBOOL—home

Leave our town's name alone—EC

Although readers were initially typecast as complacent or apathetic, their agency and humour proved otherwise. As the editor predicted, and as the response to Coates's sculpture attested, readers proved to be passionate about local issues when provoked. It could be that anonymity provided the freedom to comment, or that some readers were in on the joke. As one form of social media, SMS technology dictates a particular type of response from a

diverse audience as a method of participation. It creates a sense that everyone is being heard and can contribute to social discourse in the public sphere, even when editorial monitoring takes place. In their investigations of the wide-ranging forms of journalism that have emerged as challenges to mainstream news, Atton and Hamilton (2008) argue that regardless of accuracy or expertise “voluntary” commentaries from bloggers, tweeters and “citizen journalists” run parallel to, and interact with, opinions from expert journalists. Alternative media has political value because of its capacity to empower citizens. Commentary is central to the empowerment of ordinary people. In the logic of commercial enterprise and social capital put forward by Bourdieu, commentary also comes with strings attached. Commentary feeds back into media business. It can also be a performance that increases kudos and is measured in ‘likes’ and ratings.

For *The Standard*, the public response to *The Standard Special Lift-Out* created the desirable quality of controversy. It printed a public apology titled Media Art Creates a Cheeky Standard (Collins 2012; See ADR: *The Standard Special Lift-Out*) which attempted to bring the art closer to the audience's understanding. In retrospect, *The Standard Special Lift-Out* mirrored the tabloid media style too closely. While for some readers the content was a hilarious critique, others thought did not serve a purpose. One better outcome may have been for the humour to be more overt, and the parody more sensational. Another outcome could have been for the fictional news to work through rumour and myth, or for the audience to take a greater role in producing the content. The timing of the work leading up to the local election impacted on the reception of the piece. *The Standard Special Lift-Out* also required people to spend time with it, but instead it became another throwaway newspaper.

The process of commissioning and subsequently vetoing *The Standard Special Lift-Out* emphasised the challenges that arise when co-opting with institutions. The vetoing of the work may have been just as much about journalistic integrity as sustaining harmonious relations with the community.

Despite the brief from *The Standard* to produce “something controversial” that makes readers “sit up and take notice”, any real questioning or destabilisation of the tabloid news media was unlikely. As Kester argues, artists tread a fine line between compromise and detachment when aligned with institutions in relational art practices. Detachment is needed as art is constantly in danger of being subsumed by “consumer culture, propaganda or ‘entertainment’” (2011, p. 32).

As *The Standard Special Lift-Out* evolved, it became apparent that a degree of distance from the newspaper was needed to create critique in a real life context. Artists and collaborators could be more open to developing a discursive space for artistic provocations that critique real life situations. Close-distance is a critical position for the artist—while the process may involve compromise the intent of the artwork can remain intact. As noted in Chapter six, in relation to *Triage* and *Over the Barricade*, the process of making *The Standard Special Lift-Out* revealed the contested nature of site. Although an itinerant artist is invited into a site, often it is not clear what kind of artistic critique is welcome. Whether the artist brings fiction, humour or other methods, art can be too easily diluted into something convivial to please the hosts.

Whaleburger

The Standard Special Lift-Out included several advertisements—one being a promotion for a “delicious” new Whaleburger. Later, I transferred the design into wearable sandwich board posters for performances in Melbourne and in Tokyo. In the next part of this chapter I examine how the two iterations of *Whaleburger* adopt advertising and marketing practices combined with the conventions of performative art to create social interventions in public space. I investigate how the material aspects of site can be blended with fiction and humour to create poetic interventions, and how the aesthetic nature of these interventions draws attention to the politics of site. I also investigate the way they reveal the context specific nature of fiction and humour and articulate difference. In conclusion, I discuss the close-distance required of participatory and performative artworks in collaborative contexts.

The tabloid version of the Whaleburger advertisement (see Fig. 53) was designed to provoke a response from readers in Warrnambool's popular whale sighting region. In 2013-14, whaling was topical in the news media as Japan's whaling program Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application II in the Southern Ocean was under international pressure to disband (Press 2014). Despite the media response, the Whaleburger advertisement gained little attention. Several months later, I re-presented the work as live performances to test the audience response in marketplaces. A live iteration of the advertisement was one way of bringing to life a formal idea in public space. In Melbourne, *Whaleburger* was redesigned as a wearable product promotion, while in Tokyo it took the form of a wearable protest placard. In both spaces it gathered little critical response. Instead, it became a poetic intervention that pointed to the socio-political nature of site. The performance became a way of articulating the challenges of entering the larger discourse of international culture and negotiating different cultural contexts.



Fig. 53 Peter Burke, *Whaleburger*, advertisement (detail) for *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, 2012



Fig. 54 Peter Burke, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)*, 2013

MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne) (2013) (see Fig. 54) was presented as an impromptu intervention in shopping precincts in Melbourne's central business district. Wearing a printed image of a homemade whaleburger on a wearable sandwich board that read, "Try Our Delicious Whaleburger", I distributed "Buy one, get one free" coupons to passersby. The advertisement mimicked wearable signage popular in sites such as New York, Tokyo and New Delhi.

Although there are strict rules governing portable advertising, spruiking, touting and giveaways in Melbourne (Enterprise Melbourne 2015, *Promote your business*), some practices evade regulation because of their transitory nature. The live form did provoke more direct double-take responses from the public than *The Standard Special Lift-Out* advertisement. It did not require conversations to unfold (as *Pursuit* had done). As pedestrians grabbed the free coupons they reacted with surprise. It created punctum, small jolts in consciousness. They asked, “Is this for real?”, “Isn’t whale meat banned?”, “What the ...?”. As a roaming advertiser I moved on, leaving the audience to ponder the issue. Like other fact-o-fictional pieces performed on the street such as *Shanghai Pyjamas* (2013), *10-Day Challenge* (2013), *Sparkel* (2013) and *Mishap* (2014), *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* merged with the street activity, but created unease and confusion for some passersby.

Political and poetic interruptions

Juxtaposition and contradiction are an everyday occurrence in contested commercial sites and can be critical tools for artists. Art can employ ambiguity to create confusion (Thompson 2015) and use fiction to create a distance from reality (Parreno 2016). It can also play with deception and myth (Godfrey & Biesenbach 2010) to explore a political dimension. For Mouffe, the political dimension “is not something that is located anywhere specific; it emerges out of any relation” (2001, p. 100). Art and politics are intertwined—rather than trying to distinguish between the two, or seeking a formula for their appropriate correlation, Mouffe contends it is more important to consider how ‘critical’ art can question dominant hegemonies—critique is art’s weapon in a “‘war of position’—it would be a serious mistake to believe that artistic activism could, on its own, bring about the end of neoliberal hegemony” (2007).

In contemporary art practices, politics can be played out in numerous ways. Instead of representing politics (through language or visual imagery) one approach for artists is to place their work into the heart of the political situation itself—the real world (Thompson 2014, p. 14). Their methods can include

direct social action, performed re-enactments in urban environments that address the politics of public space, and large scale communal participatory works (MoMA 2015, *Francis Alÿs: A Story of Deception*). Poetics and allegory are also methods artists can adopt to address socio-political realities, such as national borders. The work of Alÿs is a useful example. As his 2007 exhibition title literally attests, *Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic* (MoMA 2007, Francis Alÿs). The material and symbolic aspects of site can be translated into critique through the activation of the artist. His artwork *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) pointed to the politics of a collective action—500 volunteers shifting a 1,600-foot sand dune with hand shovels. Alÿs claims “the political context was inescapable: ‘This was during the last months of the Fujimori dictatorship. Lima was in turmoil with ... an emerging movement of resistance. ... Staging a social allegory to fit the circumstances seemed more appropriate than engaging in a sculptural exercise’” (Francis Alÿs 2016, *When Faith Moves Mountains*). Whether the mountain was actually moved or not is superfluous. Alÿs’s poetic gesture of moving a mountain was deceptive. The mountain may not have been moved completely, and the work was transitory. For Alÿs, the live, poetic gesture and subsequent video documentation and images carry resonance in their ability to convey a political message.

Another approach for artists is agonistic resistance played out by artists such as The Yes Men who perform “counter-hegemonic interventions” (Mouffe 2007, p. 5). The Yes Men are known for posing as shockingly exaggerated, or uncharacteristically honest neoliberal corporates. For *Dow Does The Right Thing* (2004), The Yes Men collaborated with BBC Paris to air an apology from a fictional Dow Chemical spokesperson. On international television on the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal chemical disaster in India, “Mr Jude Finisterra” apologised for the event and offered 12 million dollars to compensate victims. The Yes Men claim the false apology actually forced Dow to publicly state their position—a curt denial of compensation and a failure to clean up the Bhopal site. In what they call “identity correction”, the artists argue the public shaming of “big time criminals” overrode any false hopes it created in victims and their families, though the hoax did upset some

Bhopalis (The Yes Men 2004, *Dow Does The Right Thing*). From Mouffe's (2007) perspective, The Yes Men's antagonistic intervention occupied a public space to disrupt the smooth image projected by corporate capitalism and revealed its repressive nature. She argues that being political for artists does not require a radical break from existing issues to create something new. As Thompson identifies, in the realm of politics media stunts are increasingly important "for those resisting power and those enforcing it" (2012, p. 24). Kester (2011), on the other hand, is critical of the unreflective nature of artistic tropes that use shock to supposedly quicken an audience's conscience, but require more nuanced modes of reception. The artworks by The Yes Men and Alÿs both employed fiction—one in the live space of the media and the other in a large-scale participatory event and video. As parodic and poetic gestures, the works rely on the artistic tropes of fiction and imagining over social transformation. From this perspective, *The Standard Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and many of the pieces created for *Pop-Up Art* operate in a similar way. As poetic and critical art, they contribute to questioning dominant conventions.

In another iteration of the *Whaleburger* piece, *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* (see Fig. 55 and Fig. 56) aimed to use fiction and humour to create a poetic interruption within concentrated pedestrian only shopping streets. Rancière (2012) argues audiences are rendered passive by spectacles of commerce and the artist can potentially activate them. The busyness of the spaces and the cultural translation the performance made activation complex. When *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* was created (during a studio residency in Tokyo in 2014), the International Court of Justice ruled that Japan cease its whaling program in the Antarctic (ABC News 2014). While the Australian public was effectively captured by the emotional arguments of the conservation movement to adopt extreme attitudes to whaling, in Japan polls showed little support for affording whales total protection (Wilson 2010), and the issue received little attention in the Japanese news media (Interview with activist 2014). *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* was less about adopting a didactic position, and more about examining how fiction and humour can activate an audience via an important topical issue in commercial space.



Fig. 55 *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)*, Harajuku, Tokyo 2014



Fig. 56 *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)*, Tsukiji, Tokyo 2014

For *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* (2014) a new outfit was created in keeping with the kawaii pop aesthetic and spruiker costumes that populate Tokyo's retail districts (see Fig. 55). The outfit consisted of a wearable sandwich board, a checkered spandex body suit, a fishing net filled with hand-stitched fluffy whales, a Glomesh fish head mask and plastic orange slippers. The sandwich board bore images of a manga whale and a whaleburger crossed-out with an X, and Japanese text that translated as Please Love Me. I broadcast the same slogan in Japanese over a megaphone as I traversed Tsukiji Fish Market (where whale bacon and whale ice cream are sold) and Takeshita-dōri, a street lined with fashion boutiques and cafés in Harajuku.

On the surface, with its free fluffy whales, cute aesthetic and sense of fun, the pop-up appeared benign. The register of whimsical humour and fiction in the performance was intended to lure people in, much like a spruiker for a sushi restaurant or a pachinko game parlour. The work was designed sit between marketing and protest, but resist direct activism that can have a waning effect. It was intended to draw attention to the dynamics of the whaling debate in a less political way. It aimed to create a space for audiences to provide responses to the issue, however the light approach failed to hit a chord with passersby. Unlike pieces such as *Over The Barricade*, discussed in Chapter six, which achieved overt responses from the audience via a picket line, *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)*'s ambiguous message generated an innocuous response.

In Tsukiji and Harajuku, audiences connected with the cute ‘character’ but not the whaling issue. People responded by posing for selfies with the costume, taking a toy whale or having a hug. Hugging larger than life size characters, a popular exchange in marketplaces in Japan, amplifies the connection fictional and physical worlds have within the commercial realm. In the case of *Whaleburger*, it is possible that the humour and fact-o-fiction in the work cancelled out each other and any connection with real life issues. As I examined in Chapter four in relation to *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair*, many tactics and props can prove to be culturally and site specific. *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* did succeed in blending into Tokyo’s marketplaces, but there did not appear to be a double-take response. The general lack of enquiry could be due to the work looking like any other advertisement, the humour being culturally coded and reliant on a cultural context for meaning, or the downplaying of the issue in the media. A familiarity with kawaii promotions may have overrode any underlying political message in the work. The public may also have recognised naïveté at play, or perhaps were hiding offence under politeness—as we often do among strangers or foreigners. Also, as Bourdieu argues in the *Rules of Art*, artworks easily suffer from the “wearing out of the effect”—a result that “arises from the repeated application of proved procedures and the uninventive use of an art of inventing [the] already invented” (1992, p. 253). The waning of effect applies equally to advertising and the street. It is an effect that even avant-garde movements cannot escape. In what he calls “the erosion of the effect of rupture” and the “banalisation of the effect of debanalisation ... the first ones to be weary are those who are most exposed” (Ibid.). Yet as a poetic interruption immersed in its surroundings, the banal, immobilised condition of *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* was strangely profound.

Conclusion

In this chapter the methods of fact-o-fiction and humour have been discussed in relation to three context dependent and site responsive pop-ups that aimed to unsettle the conventional reception of commercial sites. *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* used fact-o-fiction, humour and topical issues to create

humorous spectacles and engage with audiences. Rather than direct critique, they borrow the symbolic and material forms to create poetic gestures. They demonstrated how fiction can be used to represent topical issues, and how humour is culturally coded and its meaning shifts from site to site. While *The Standard Special Lift-Out* partly succeeded in engaging with audiences, it proved difficult to employ the same slippage between truth and fiction as the news media and to provoke reflection on the conventions of the media. In the space of a newspaper some distance from the original was required. It discovered that in collaborations, detachment is often necessary in order for the intent of the artwork to remain intact. While *The Standard Special Lift-Out* was able to create a brief interstice for critique, the *Whaleburger* pieces were too close to the commercial environments they mimicked to stand out. In Melbourne the work created punctum, but in Tokyo it failed to prick consciousness or offer something meaningful. *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* revealed immersive pop-ups necessitate a distance from commerce. The need for close-distance was uncovered as the agitation in the works failed to take effect in their respective contexts. The complexity of site these pieces negotiated echoed those of the artworld (discussed in Chapter four) and will be explored further in the following chapter, Site and Situation.

Introduction

This chapter examines how performance art practices can use the material (physical), symbolic and social relations of site (the street/gallery) to highlight the socio-political nature of site, activate participation and provoke critique. I investigate how a contemporary experience of site is perceived as “contested”, “unfixed” and “discursive” (Kwon 2002; Doherty 2004). I examine site based art practices in public sites such as galleries, art fairs and commissioned public artworks in social spaces, and how performative interventions can create temporary moments that unsettle passive experiences of these sites. Using a series of experiments and artworks created during this research project, *Triage* (2013), *Ban the Biennale?* (2014), *Over the Barricade* (2014) and *Attaché Case* (2015), I analyse the complexity and effectiveness of interventionist methods in creating interactions and forming critique. Finally, I argue that close distance is necessary for the contemporary artist when working in-between autonomy and co-option in contested, unfixed and discursive sites and situations.

In her research of contemporary public spaces, Miwon Kwon argues that a relationship between an artwork and its site is no longer solely based on “physical permanence” (as demanded by Richard Serra, for example, and his sculptures in public sites), but rather on “unfixed impermanence” (2002, pp. 29-30). Site is not purely based on a “physical location—grounded, fixed, actual” but also includes “a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual” (Ibid.). Site is less defined by a gallery, museum or other locations, but is open to “more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life—a critique of culture that ... blurs the division between art and non-art” (Ibid.). Site can be “as various as a billboard, an artistic genre, a disenfranchised community, an institutional framework, a magazine page, a social cause, or a political debate. It can be literal, like a street corner, or virtual, like a theoretical concept” (Ibid. p. 3).

From the 1960s onwards the enclosed nature of site has been challenged by artists such as Allan Kaprow, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Yves Klein, Akademia Ruchu, Ala Plástica and Mierle Laderman Ukeles by “complicating the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic, and political processes” (Kwon 2004, p. 3). In Doherty’s analysis of the contemporary shift from studio to sites and situations, she observes how a concern for temporality and site-specificity has evolved out of relational art practices (2004). Artistic collaborations with sites can therefore be social—they are unfixed enquiries defined by potentially unrepeatable, discursive, fleeting situations that include ethnographic processes, social relations, power relations, ethical considerations and conversations. As site and the social become more central to art practices and as artists engage with real life situations, the artist cannot avoid the existing power relations within social spaces.

Nato Thompson (2015) contends artists are implicated in the rapid gentrification of urban spaces worldwide. The social turn in art coincides with models of urban development. Spatial production and cultural production inform one another and play key roles in the growth of a city. Through cooption, absorption or resistance, artists are entwined in battles that reveal the redistribution, privatisation and regulation of public space. These battles reveal complex contests for power over infrastructure and communities.

Using transient methods that work in tandem with the aesthetic, poetic and political aspects of site, it is possible for the artist to insert an interstice for critique into social spaces. Artists such as Hans Haacke, Hubert Czerepok and Grayson Perry seize the material forms and language of site for this purpose. For example, Haacke’s MoMA Poll (1970), in which he posed a question to audiences about the political persuasions of a member of the MoMA’s board of trustees, “recast the site of art as an institutional frame in social, economic and political terms, and enforced these terms as the very content of the artwork” (Haacke cited in Wroe 2015). For Haacke, art plays a small part “in shaping what people think and talk about and even who is going to be running the government” (Ibid.).

Art does not always create radical transformations, but it can puncture the surface (punctum) and challenge the thinking in a site. In Czerepok's *Let's Change It All* (2014) (see Fig. 57) school children carried "placards calling only for good things" in a "protest march" during the *Biennale of Sydney* (Biennale of Sydney 2014, Artists: Hubert Czerepok). In Grayson Perry's *Claire at Tate Britain* (1999), his alter ego poses in front of Tate Britain with the placard "No More Art" (see Fig. 58). Adopting protest for its 'embedded' political meaning is also a ploy adopted by advertising—fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld created a feminist protest march at Paris Fashion Week in 2014 (see Fig. 59). It could be argued that Czerepok, Grayson and Lagerfeld, like Schlingensiefel's *Please Love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week*, 2000 (2000) and Alÿs' *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) (discussed in chapters two and five), merely aestheticise—and even trivialise—the social, political and symbolic aspects of protest culture.

As Thompson argues, socially engaged art is increasingly populist and activist art is too easily "digested by the conditions of power" (2012, p. 31). Yet as Mouffe and Rancière (2011) attest, the aesthetic and political can occur simultaneously. Czerepok's performance invades streets with words of optimism inverting "the accepted notion that a public demonstration is a negative activity [and] the adage that children should be seen and not heard" (Biennale of Sydney 2014, Artists: Hubert Czerepok). Grayson's solo protest playfully indulges in the contradictions museum sites typically support. Lagerfeld's advertising ploy was criticised by the media for belittling the feminist cause (Cartner-Morley 2014), but arguably it adopted sites of the body and the street to re-present a loaded issue in a humorous light, and to reimagine gender equality within a neoliberal context. Haake, Czerepok, Grayson and Lagerfeld activate discourses through transient interventions. By performing poetic gestures the strategic placement of these works expose tensions among the multiple occupants of a site relating to the control of social space.

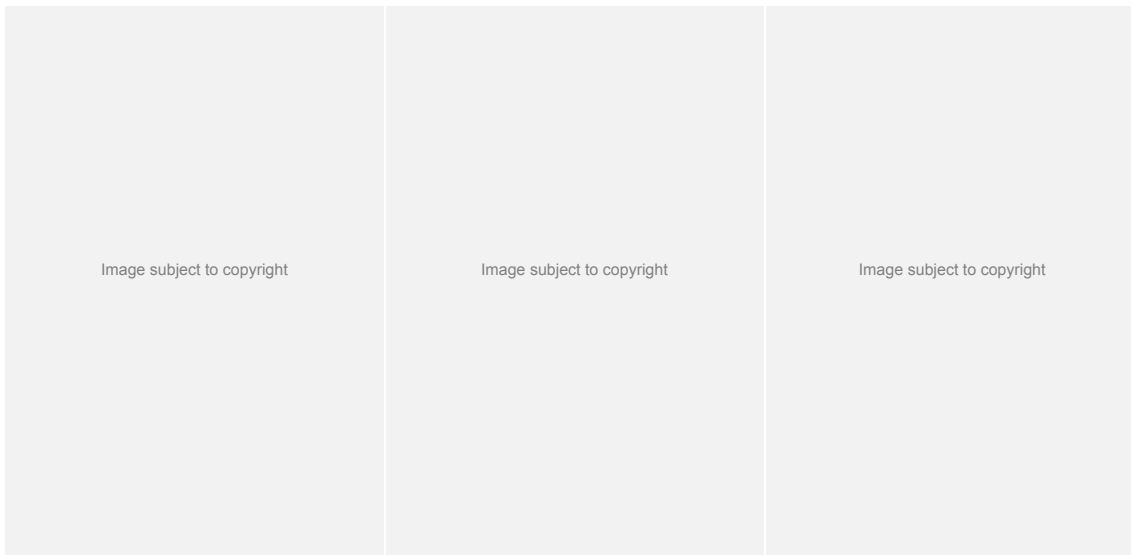


Fig. 57 Hubert Czerepok, *Let's Change it All*, 2014

Fig. 58 Grayson Perry, *Claire at Tate Gallery*, 1999

Fig. 59 Karl Lagerfeld, Paris Fashion Week, 2014

Pop-Up Art appropriates the lo-fi aesthetic of mass culture—tabloid newspapers, roadside memorials, protest banners, wearable advertising, vendor stalls and pop-ups. The material forms and language this project adopts are intended to blend the artworks into streets, marketplaces and galleries. Their lo-fi nature and accessibility aims to resist the perceived exclusivity of the art museum (Stallabrass 2004). Of course, the artworks generate their own mystification and aura, but they attempt to use the symbolic meaning of a site or a situation to connect with real life issues. The works question how meaningful discourse can be created if a contemporary experience of site is defined by the tensions of transience and capitalist expansion. The artworks discussed in *Site and Situation* utilise live face-to-face interactions to occupy a site temporarily and disrupt habitus. Some of the pieces occupy sites via invitation or commission while others hijack sites using guerilla tactics. In this chapter, the ability of performance to activate interaction and critique is the focus of a series of experiments and four pieces—*Triage* (2013), *Over the Barricade* (2014) and *Ban the Biennale?* (2014) and *Attaché Case*. They present alternative approaches to those used in *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* (discussed in Chapter five) that were lost in commercial marketplaces, perhaps due to the cultural translation of the work, lack of conversation or language barriers.



Fig. 60 Peter Burke, *Shanghai Pyjamas*, Shanghai, 2013



Fig. 61 Peter Burke, *Mishap*, Shanghai, 2013

Developmental works and experiments

In addition to the final pieces created as part of this PhD, I have conducted other developmental experiments such as *Shanghai Pyjamas* (2013) (see Fig. 60), *Mishap* (2013-15) (see Fig. 61), *Free Tissues* (2014) (see Fig. 62) and *Shoelaces* (2014) (see Fig. 63) that have informed *Pop-Up Art*. These works informed the PhD pieces by exploring ways pop-ups can stand out from urban environments, explaining reticence and indifference in public places, and animating public trust. The works were set in city locations in Shanghai, Tokyo, New Delhi and Melbourne with high pedestrian traffic and commercial backdrops that provided a contrast to the small, human gestures. Like many of the PhD pieces, some of the works offered free giveaways.

In marketing and in the artworld, free gifts such as bottles of wine or product samples have their own persuasive currency. In Tokyo, where free tissue packs are a marketing ploy, I gave away 300 of my own tissue packs to commuters at Shinjuku Station. It was an alternative method to the free fluffy whales distributed in *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* where people took the gifts but rarely engaged. The tissue packs contained fliers with instructions but still no one responded. *Shoelaces* and *Mishap*, on the other hand, were able to attract the participation of passersby. Like *Triage*, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban the Biennale?* analysed in this chapter, people generally interacted more when they were moved to do so, or when they could offer assistance. In *Shoelaces*, I walked on the street with a shoelace undone each day until a passerby pointed it out. In *Mishap*, I spilt the contents of my

briefcase into pedestrian traffic to see who would help to pick them up. These gestures were simple and stripped of the narrative detail that *Pursuit*, *Love is in the Fair*, *The Standard Special Lift-Out* and the *Whaleburger* pieces required to be understood.

When performing *Mishap*, passersby in Tokyo and Shanghai rushed to pick up the spilt papers, while in New Delhi I was often left to clean up my own mess. It was difficult to assess the different reactions in such a brief encounter. In the circumstances it is unlikely that the audiences would have recognised the interventions as artworks, even though there were cameras in the distance. When passersby engaged it appeared to reveal concern, kindness and empathy. When passersby did not help it begged the question of whether it was my business suit and its associations with power, the fear of corruption, apathy, or the way pedestrians are conditioned to engage or disengage in public space that prevented people from helping.

Psychologists may look to the bystander effect—the social phenomenon where individuals are less inclined to help when others are present—to explain the reactions. They may also be understood through a “blasé outlook” experienced in the modern metropolis consisting in the “blunting of discrimination”—an unresponsiveness to stimulation, and a refusal or inability to be emotionally moved by, or involved in people and things (Simmel cited in Wolff 1950, pp. 409-424). In tandem with the experiments, these examinations provided a further understanding of human behaviour in public places.



Fig. 62 Peter Burke, *Free Tissues*, 2014



Fig. 63 Peter Burke, *Shoelaces*, 2014

Random encounters in the city are transitory and may seem not worth a significant investment of time or emotion. Like the experiments that produced both predictable and unpredictable scenarios, the PhD pieces in this chapter are concerned with countering dormancy in social spaces. Through practice the pieces reveal how a balance of conviviality and disruption is needed to interrupt sites and situations—this close-distance can facilitate discourses around the politics governing site. On the one hand, purely convivial experiences can fail to disrupt conventions and glide over any serious critique. On the other hand, negative disruption can impact on the level of interaction and create unnecessary feelings of fear that the humour in the artworks aims to counter. The delicate balance between these approaches influences the choice of props, costumes, actions and dialogue used during the performances. These approaches are then adapted on the spot when more engagement or critique is required.

Triage

Triage (2013) (see Fig. 64) is a discursive piece that brought the politics of site to public attention and was created in collaboration with the artist Louise Lavarack. This work, commissioned by the City of Melbourne, was designed to mark the demise of a mature street tree illegally poisoned in Melbourne's central business district. Meticulously wrapped in cotton wool and gauze bandages by Lavarack, the tree became a ghostly roadside memorial in the midst of an otherwise flourishing avenue of plane trees. Over three months, I supervised a gathering of floral tributes and messages of sympathy at the base of the tree and on social media. We shared many impromptu conversations with passersby—far from passive in their response, the majority were passionate about a range of environmental issues including tree vandalism, professional tree poisoning and the privatisation of public space. The artwork disrupted the 'unnoticed factor' of city landscaping amongst the urban bustle. The conversations around the tree brought us to the heart of the matter—they drew attention to the politics of site and urban development.

In line with its Urban Forest Strategy (City of Melbourne 2015, Urban Forest Strategy, Making a Forest Greener 2012-2032), the local council chose to

deal with the tree poisoning in a non-confrontational yet highly visible manner. Perhaps unable to identify anyone responsible for damaging the tree, or possibly reluctant to prosecute any vandals because of political or economic pressures, it mobilised art to highlight tree vandalism within Melbourne's central business district. Yet the work expanded beyond this idea as the participation evolved. We found people developed an attachment to the piece over time and demonstrated ownership of their public space. What emerged were multiple reflections from passersby who gathered at the site of the tree to engage in face-to-face conversations or simply observe the installation.

I visited the site regularly, wearing a waist-high cardboard tray that doubled as a writing table where the public could write messages. They penned comments onto cutout paper leaves and pinned them to the bandages around the trunk. The notes conveyed a range of opinions from curiosity to disbelief, sorrow and anger: "Vale plane tree. Too short a life", "I love you Mr Tree", "We will miss you", "Grace and peace", "I'm sorry for you Tree. Those bastards", "Visionless". Some passersby gifted cards, poems, flowers and mementoes around the trunk, Japanese tourists bowed with respect and others hugged the tree. Over the three months, Lavarack and I also created our own messages. A placard facing the road provoked drivers to "Toot For Trees". A photo of a gorilla bore the speech bubble "Monkey business?" and a drawing of birds tweeted "Where is my home?" A small, framed card noted how much carbon dioxide one tree absorbs, and the amount of oxygen it releases over its lifetime.



Fig. 64 Peter Burke and Louise Lavarack, *Triage*, Melbourne, 2013



Fig. 65 Peter Burke, *Tree Hug Blitz*, Shanghai, 2013

Although some of the messages pinned to the tree were unoriginal, they expressed a concern for the disruption to the site and heightened an awareness of the governance of site. The ghostly tree also produced emotional responses from passersby—some thought a person had died in a road accident, others accused us of killing the tree. When we explained that the tree had been illegally poisoned (through holes drilled into its base), some people took ownership of the space as they felt the tree and the street belonged to them. As noted in Chapter five in relation to *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, an attachment to site is often not recognised until the site is disrupted. When patterns (*habitus*) are shifted, dynamics are made visible. Tensions at the site were also brought to light as messages on the tree directed towards perpetrators mysteriously disappeared. When a negative comment about rampant apartment developers was posted on social media, the commissioning body distanced itself from the online activity. The interactions demonstrated the complexity of protest, regulation and critique within the social sphere where public and private space is highly contested.

In her analysis of the vectors of social art practice, Jackson argues, “certain forms of civic collaboration make unpalatable alliances” (2011, p. 72). She claims “degraded” forms of stage management arise when artists engage with bureaucracies or institutions. In contrast to this, we found that the local council afforded *Triage* time and space for a collective critique of site. As a transitory memorial, the artwork was able to operate from a close-distance. The tree may have been a “fixed object” but it became a social “structure through which dialogue [was] encouraged” (Hjorth & Sharp 2014, p. 133). It provided a platform for multiple voices and divergent opinions—what emerged were tensions underpinning the occupation and control of site. *Triage* did not change shift the hegemonic relations that Mouffe (2005) claims an agonistic space can do. The space it created highlighted the different powers in the site, but it refused to take sides. *Triage* was able to absorb the feelings, thoughts and memories that were projected onto it. In contrast to unreflective responses *The Standard Special Lift-Out* produced, *Triage* became imprinted in the public imagination and has sparked ongoing conversations.

As *Triage* evolved, Lavarack and I created several peripheral activities including a candlelight vigil, and a tree hugging event called *Tree Hug Blitz* (2013). On International Tree Day, we dressed in explorer outfits and circumnavigated Melbourne's central business district embracing 300 trees over a nine-hour period. A gold ribbon was tied to each tree with a tag that read, "This Tree Has Been Hugged". In another iteration of *Tree Hug Blitz* in Shanghai, I created a series of photographs that captured the single gesture of hugging notoriously resilient urban trees (see Fig. 65). Like Melbourne and other international cities, Shanghai's plane trees create canopies over footpaths and cafés in addition to forming shop displays, clotheslines, places to hang mops and brooms, store cartons and park bicycles. Each embrace highlighted the tree's participation and usefulness within urban forests and the silent ritual became a slow, meditative experience of site. While the activities did not go by unnoticed, only a few passersby engaged in conversations or hugged trees with us. The work revealed how symbolic, performative gestures can gently interrupt the way urban space is experienced and draw attention to unnoticed aspects of a site. It also reinforced the idea that performative gestures can require more overt approaches to generate interaction, conversations and critique. To test this idea, an antagonistic approach was adopted in the subsequent two pieces.

Over the Barricade

In stark contrast to *Triage*, two PhD pieces *Over the Barricade* (2014) (see Fig. 66 and Fig. 67) and *Ban the Biennale?* (2014) (see Fig. 68 and Fig. 69) employed protest at a conference and within an art competition to spark public controversy. *Over the Barricade* was a tongue-in-cheek picket line installed in the grounds of the Footscray Arts Centre and the Incinerator Gallery in Melbourne, that directly engaged in the debate around the evaluation of art and artworld gatekeeping. Created in collaboration with Lavarack, *Over the Barricade* was a commissioned piece for the Spectres of Evaluation conference, organised by the Centre for Cultural Practice, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, in collaboration with the Footscray Community Arts Centre in Footscray, Melbourne. Taking its cue from Thomas Hirschhorn's diagram *Spectre of Evaluation* (2008) the conference looked to

“reconfigure the relationship between artists, art experts, and what the artist terms the ‘non-exclusive audience’” (Spectres of Evaluation 2014). Our application for a pseudo-protest satisfied the organisers to the extent that images of the work were used as promotional material and the conference hosts joined the picket line on the second day of the event. The marketability and popularity of protest and intervention, both impromptu and invited, places the artist in a challenging position. If critique (disguised as pseudo-protest) is easily consumed, the artist must maintain close-distance. Rather than being the subject of promotional activities, the artist can exploit them by being *between* autonomous and commissioned activities.



Fig. 66 Peter Burke and Louise Lavarack, *Over the Barricade*, Melbourne, 2014



Fig. 67 Peter Burke and Louise Lavarack, *Over the Barricade*, Melbourne, 2014

For the protest, 80-hand painted placards and banners were created which responded to the assertion that art is haunted by spectres of evaluation, with competing claims and judgments about the limits, uses, and value of art (Spectres of Evaluation 2014). The slogans included: “Art comes Not Outcomes, Real Life Real Art, Beware—Art Experts Ahead, The Spectre Of Evaluation Is The Death Of Art, This Way To Tupperware Party and I’d Question My Assumptions If I Knew What They Were”. They drew attention to the paradoxes and questions raised by socially engaged art practices such as the focus on feel-good experiences without critique, the evaluation of art on economic and populist terms and the emphasis on ethics over aesthetics. The specific text on the placards playfully blended ‘artspeak’ with protest language and was intended to be both cheeky and thought provoking. It addressed the vast gap between real life and art—where art is cocooned within the sites of

art—and within the confines of artistic discourse. As Rancière (2009; 2010) points out, language and definitions are ways in which the artworld maintains control of site. The space of the museum for example, has historically severed art from its function in real life. Art's project is not necessarily to eliminate art, but reduce its alienation from life.

Taking this stance I engaged 12-actors as rowdy protestors, and together we marched around the site chanting “More Art Less Fart”. It created a noisy and confusing spectacle during the two-day event. It mixed farce, politics and art—each pointed to the seriousness and the absurdity of the other. Initially, *Over the Barricade* was disconcerting, evidenced by several people who were not sure if the protest was real or or a performance. When the humour was grasped, it made people both laugh and think. The fictional placards provoked emotional responses, highlighting the ability of fiction incite debate about real issues. The questioning and fervour the work generated was also in part due to the expectation of absurdity from art. On the one hand, *Over the Barricade* was alienating, but on the other it drew audiences in. They looked at the familiar artspeak in a new way. It sparked a questioning of preconceptions. Conference goers were dared to cross a chalk line into the conference hall. Later, attendees were drawn into the debates by creating their own placards, sitting on the picket line or throwing tomatoes. One person spat at us. At times, the situations created were ambiguous, humorous, unpredictable and thought provoking. As the performance wore on, people started to engage with the work in a more reflective way and wanted to discuss the ideas it raised. One audience member wanted to purchase a placard as a work of art. Consequently, we adapted the performance, put our placards down and had conversations. The protest conformed to a pattern of pseudo-resistance—a familiar approach in contemporary socially engaged art (Davis 2010). Like the work of Czerepok and Perry, it can shift thinking in a site. We found that fiction and humour were able to produce a space for a discussion about artworld relations. As the protest animated the debates around socially engaged art, it proved possible to highlight the divided and unequal relations in the site.

Ban the Biennale?

In a similar protest work, *Ban the Biennale?* (2014) was designed to generate discussion around the value of art. *Ban the Biennale?* featured a one-man public protest, a tent, a protester and placards posing cheeky the questions: “Is This Art? How Can Art Change The World? Where Is The Plinth? Does Art Suck?”. Visitors to the *Lorne Sculpture Biennale*, a competition in coastal Victoria, were invited to create placards for display in a discursive installation around the tent. Dressed as a lone protester, I roamed the foreshore on a bicycle broadcasting questions over a megaphone. Members of the public were drawn into a lively, impromptu debate about the art on display in the competition and the value of art in general. They took away free badges that read: “I Don’t Know Much About Art But I Know What I Like. Everyone’s A Winner. Feed The Artist”. It addressed the duplicitous position I was in as both activist and competition entrant.



Fig. 68 Peter Burke, *Ban the Biennale?*, Lorne Sculpture Biennale, Lorne, 2014



Fig. 69 Peter Burke, *Ban the Biennale?*, Lorne Sculpture Biennale, Lorne, 2014

While not on the scale of international biennales, cultural enterprises such as the *Lorne Sculpture Biennale* are products of the global art economy and inextricably tied to cultural capital. As Thompson (2015) and Stallabrass (2014) identify, the rise of event culture coincides with current models of development for creative precincts, cities and regional areas. The *Lorne Sculpture Biennale* attracts established and emerging artists, as well as international and nationally recognised judges and is supported by a gamut of patrons and sponsors. These events often rely on spectacles orchestrated by artists, critics and curators. They rejuvenate sites via the cultural capital of art,

in this case a beachside town populated by a small local community and tourists. Spectacles and mobility run parallel to and intersect with the embedded, long-term relationships in communities advocated by Kester (2011). *Ban the Biennale?* investigated how the commercial conditions of site can be critiqued by the social space of art. The artist can adopt these aspects as a means to examine the market forces that commodify art. Like many of the pop-ups created for this research, *Ban the Biennale?* temporarily agitated the exhibition site to activate conversations about these conditions.

The experience of site is fractured, porous and fragile. Critique of site can easily backflip and negate any reflection because it is not always clear how a method will play out in live action. For example, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban the Biennale?* relied upon protest to generate audience reactions. Initially audiences were duped by its fictitious nature but later they recognised it for what it was—a humorous critique of the art competition and artworld practices. Like *Over the Barricade*, the slogans on the placards pointed to the contradictions within cultural events such as art competitions. The register of farce in the commentary was designed to provoke a humorous response. When people joined the conversation, *Ban the Biennale?* became an outlet for opinions about topical issues, the site, art and the artist.

Those critical of the protest camp said it was a “blight on the foreshore”, “definitely not art” and “just plain ugly”. Some local residents said it was “antagonistic” and unnecessarily provoked the community. They did not see the work as a multi-faceted critique and thought the competition (that they had sponsored), was being ridiculed. For the curators who had accepted my proposal, the discourse that the performance provoked opened up notions of what site-specific art could be. Some people were eager to write their own placards using the paints and brushes on hand. An art dealer wrote “Art Dealers Have Feelings Too”. A resident made a placard, “Save Our Waterways” in reference to wastewater management and the contamination of waterways along the south coast of Victoria. In response to my installation, one person wrote “My Kid Could Do That”.

For Mouffe, artistic activism on its own cannot bring about social change—the artist must give up its privileged position and instead create spaces for divergent voices. Although *Ban the Biennale?* opens up a space for audiences to voice dissent, the work hovers away from being *too* political. The mock protest camp ricochets between seriousness and ridiculousness in order that is not pinned down by politics or entertainment. While Mouffe asserts that all art is political, art does not necessarily have to be absorbed into politics, social work, activism or didactics. It does not need to relinquish its performative elements or aesthetics. By combining humour with serious, contentious topics, the correct balance of the two can agitate the spaces—producing laughter and a release. Instead of producing more dissent or fear, it aims to go some way towards revealing the conventions that uphold power structures.

In contrast to *Ban the Biennale?* a real intervention—a makeshift raft—was moored within the exhibition precinct with its own homemade catalogue label. A committee member purportedly encouraged the intervention, marking several complexities within the site—one being the frustration felt by the outsider artist compelled to gate crash the site and “challenge power” (Thompson and Sholette 2004). Through the act of trespass the rules surrounding the competition itself did not go unnoticed. As noted in Chapter four in relation to *Pursuit*, challenges to the status quo have allure in the artworld. The intervention also revealed that those who manage site can be equally frustrated by conventions and habitus, and even encourage artists to shift them. It suggests an inherit belief in the transformative power of art. This complexity also may have applied to the local council who supported *Triage*, but perhaps was in a double bind with policies of urban development. If revolution is no longer possible (Han 2015), art and its collaborators who are often bestowed with privilege (Kwon 2005), can work in-between sites of power. By adopting an attitude of close-distance, critique can be enacted from within in collaborative situations and competitive environments.

Like *Mishap* and *Over the Barricade*, *Ban the Biennale?* did not nurture long-term relationships. Instead it performed mobility and surprise. It made use of the transient nature of existing social relations to highlight the socio-political nature of site. *Ban the Biennale?* performed an heroic protest as though it would ‘change the world’. As Ala Plastica member Alejandro Meitin claims, “art has a special kind of knowledge: a way of perceiving, investigating and changing the world as a way of counterbalancing a world that is dominated by reason” (cited in Kester 2011, p. 145). The poetic means of protest provoked reflection on the “contingent systems that support the management of life” (Jackson 2011, p. 29). *Ban the Biennale?* did not radically transform the audience or the site. In its estrangement it created an awareness of the complexity and co-dependency of the art competition and revealed the invisible logic on which the site depends.

Attaché Case

In the final piece created for *Pop-Up Art*, *Attaché Case* (2015) (see Fig. 70 and Fig. 71) highlighted the unevenness of access to site. This work initially evolved out of *Pursuit* by extending the curatorial parameters of a miniature exhibition inside a briefcase, but the method and approach employed was influenced by Kester’s (2011) notion of reflective spaces for art. As *Triage*, *Whaleburger*, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban the Biennale?* had done, *Attaché Case* addressed a topical issue, but it did not depend on protest or conversations to quicken an audience’s conscience. This piece was a poetic reflection on the politics of site and required a more nuanced mode of reception. *Attaché Case* developed as a response to an invitation from the Spanish Embassy in Canberra to participate in a travelling exhibition *Low Cost Diplomatic Bag*. Under tight budget restraints, the embassy approached 16 artists from 16 countries to produce artworks the size of a carry on bag for a low cost airline. I chose to develop *Pursuit*’s concept of a pop-up gallery; and play on the idea that the contents of a diplomat’s bag have diplomatic immunity.



Fig. 70 Peter Burke, *Attaché Case*, 2015

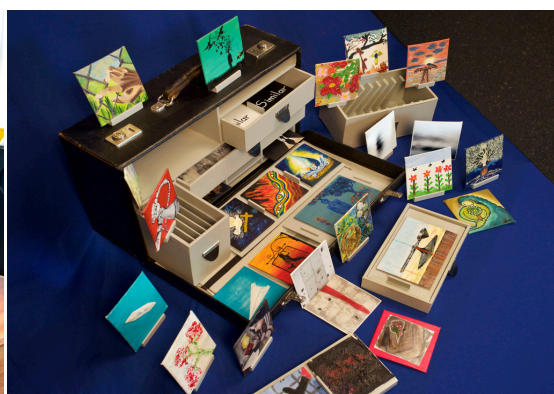


Fig. 71 Peter Burke, *Attaché Case*, 2015

I invited 23 asylum seekers and refugees living in Melbourne to create artworks for *Attaché Case*. The artists, some still held in Australian government detention centres, originated from countries including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Poland, Columbia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. In their artworks they explored diverse issues about waiting, detainment, political policies, optimism and being in limbo. Many of the works addressed the conditions of site including obvious references to borders and the isolating conditions of detention centres familiar in the mass media. More somber works drew on emotional states—separation, loneliness, depression and grief—while other works reflected on optimistic experiences such as playing in a tree, waking up beside someone you love, or studying. Many artists wrote messages on the reverse of their artwork. The project poignantly captures the personal experience of refugees and gives voice to those who are seldom heard or seen.

All but one of the artists I approached was keen to take part in my project. Although I had opened up the exhibition opportunity as a platform for others, the artist felt the concept was patronising, disrespectful and imperialistic. For this artist, an art practice should be “about itself”, and the artist's citizenship status as a concept should not matter. The artists who did participate expressed surprise and delight when invited to take part in the exhibition. In contrast to the exhibitors in *Pursuit's* gallery, many of the artists did not necessarily have access to exhibition platforms. As a whole, the artists opted to use painting as a political form and the installation in the briefcase reflected on the regulation of site in a poetic manner.

In keeping with *Pursuit's* performative element, I flew from Melbourne to Canberra to present the briefcase to the senior ambassador of Spain. I arrived at the Spanish Embassy handcuffed to the briefcase. The ambassador unlocked the briefcase at a ceremonial event attended by the media. The contents of the briefcase were then revealed in public for the first time. A video documenting the event was displayed with the briefcase in the *Low Cost Diplomatic Bag* exhibition and is included on the website that features documentation from the PhD. In the video, a more complex relationship to hierarchical structures is activated—conflicting meanings of pleasure and punctum are interplayed. Unlike *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, the collaboration with the organisers enabled a relationship of close-distance as a space was permitted for the political and the poetic to co-exist. Like *Triage*, *Attaché Case* evades overt humour—the briefcase and its contents present a solemn message. It reveals subtleties in the refugee experience that are not always evident in media representations. The sobriety is countered with a humorous, performative element, but it does not make light of the content. Instead, the approach produces friction. The balance between political agency and aesthetics within the installation and video shifts the work away from being read literally as social work, politics or entertainment.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how four pieces, *Triage*, *Over The Barricade*, *Ban the Biennale?* and *Attaché Case*, employ the existing conditions of sites to reveal invisible dynamics, activate participation and provoke critique. The pieces were situated on a city street, at a conference, in an art competition and a travelling exhibition where they became a temporary platform for participants. These artworks and altruistic, benign and antagonistic methods to create spaces that encouraged participation, highlighted topical issues and disrupted the usual experience of site. As commissioned pieces, they were permitted degrees of distance from their organisers that allowed the work to push boundaries, insert questions, and have a critical effect. Although the interventions were temporary, emerging in their place is a re-imagining of how site can be inhabited.

Pop-Up Art: Performing Creative Disruption in Social Space is a performative and participatory project that examines how these practices can disrupt, unsettle and subtly transform dispositions within social space. The context dependent and site responsive project analyses how creative disruption can critique the shifting roles and relationships of the artworld; how fiction and humour can unsettle regulated sites and situations; and how performance art practices can activate participation and provoke critique of the social, symbolic and material relations of space.

The theoretical framework for the project is underpinned by Miwon Kwon's notion of the public sphere as a contradictory fusion of commerce, civic regulation and everyday life, Pierre Bourdieu's use of the concept of habitus to define the conventions of social space, and Henri Lefebvre's claim that space is socially produced. It is informed by Chantal Mouffe's model for agonistic spaces that accommodate conflict and are key to undoing power structures, and Jacques Rancière's appeal to artists to stimulate self-reflexivity in audiences numbed by the spectacle of commerce.

The overarching link binding the individual artworks and research questions, is a reflexive approach devised to operate across complex commercial contexts to create interstices that interrupt social conventions. The research outcomes are a series of impromptu and commissioned pop-ups within selected sites of the artworld and the street. Each pop-up is a component that tests how the artwork can actively occupy social space. The pop-ups inform one another and ultimately they converge to present the new knowledge of close-distance. They offer an amalgam of porous methods that are fundamental to negotiating the tumult of contested sites in which the projects take place. They contain a number of key findings contributing original knowledge to contemporary art practice, particularly to performance and socially engaged practices. This chapter discusses the research outcomes in relation to the three research questions.

The first research question investigated ways the artist can use creative disruption to critique artworld roles and relationships. The artworld is one example of a highly contested social space defined by shifting roles, dispositions and tensions. As more entrepreneurial relationships evolve between the artworld, commerce and the general public, the roles of the artist, curator and audience are increasingly blended. The pop-ups discussed in Chapter four, *Activating Artworld Relations*, were designed to insert critiques of the social structures and roles within artworld sites. *Pursuit* was a series of performative interventions in international art fairs, galleries and other commercial marketplaces. Disguised as a guerilla gallery, it examined how impromptu and invited intervention and subversion can draw attention to the interdependent roles and hierarchies in the artworld. During the process, *Pursuit* was co-opted by arts institutions as a commissioned performance and, although the focus of the work shifted, it proved possible to stimulate self-reflexive critique in audiences in this context. *Pursuit* used an amalgam of fiction and humour to perform surprising situations in which audiences wanted to engage in conversations about the socio-political relations of art sites. As a parody of art dealership, *Pursuit* created pricks or punctum in the usual reception of the art commodity system. Buyers took away purchases, but also carried a memory of the live interaction and critique attached to the art object.

In another project that examined artworld relations and adopted an existing model of social interaction within event culture, *Love is in the Fair* invited art fair audiences to participate in art-speed-dates. It created intimate interactions between fair goers, artists, dealers, curators and fair staff who may not otherwise know each other or engage socially. The dates provided both disconcerting and exciting experiences for participants. They also disrupted an assumption that participatory artworks are always convivial. It brought to focus the visible and invisible social structure at the fair that mirrors the hierarchy of the wider artworld. Using flamboyant parody and farce it momentarily inverted the fair theatrics to create a levelling effect between participants and other artworld players.

Both *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* did not alter the existing structure of artworld sites. The works posed no threat to the art fair system, but their registers of fiction and humour created spaces for critique. The pieces highlighted the neoliberal conditions that inscribe art, prompting a series of questions for audiences about artworld relations. *Pursuit* and *Love is in the Fair* did not overtly resist the artworld's emphasis on interdependent relations or its commercial aspects—they playfully embraced the value the artworld ascribes to social relations, the art object and to subversion. The double-take brought to the surface the conventions that determine exclusion and access within the artworld. The immersive process uncovered that a resistant edge is required in the register of close-distance so that the work is not easily absorbed into event culture.

The second research question required an examination of how fiction and humour could be used in performative art practices to unsettle social conventions and reveal the contested nature of site. The three pop-ups, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, *MMM Whaleburger (Melbourne)* and *Please Love Me: Whaleburger (Tokyo)* discussed in Chapter five, Fact-o-fiction, blended fiction with real life issues. They merged into commercial spaces—a newspaper and two street markets—to test ways in which art can engage with topical issues to be made more accessible to audiences. A range of approaches, from benign to provocative and altruistic, were employed with fact-o-fiction and humour, to provoke interaction and stimulate conversations.

In *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, fictional news stories were inserted into a run of 10,000 real newspapers. In *Whaleburger*, while a real debate about commercial whaling played out in the news media, the issue was placed into fictional advertisements. The artworks interplayed politics and poetics, fact and fiction, and humour and seriousness. They uncovered close correlations between these elements—how poetics can be usefully deployed to convey political ideas, how fiction can reveal critiques of the real world, and how humour can be combined with serious issues. The methods of fact-o-fiction and humour offered a reflexive means to toggle in-between performance and real life, and create a balance between critique and fun.

When the pop-ups were played out, they exposed the context specific nature of humour and fiction and the need for the methods to be flexible. Both *The Standard Special Lift-Out* and the *Whaleburger* pieces necessitated their own particular pitches of satire and mimicry to negotiate the relations in a site, and to create punctum—small pricks in consciousness. While the pop-ups did generate degrees of dialogue about topical issues, it proved difficult to generate critique in commercial contexts where space, visibility and time are heavily contested. In these situations, the pop-ups were overpowered by their contexts and muted. The aftermath of these works suggests that in commercial collaborations fact-o-fiction requires a close-distance from the original that it imitates. Detachment—a delicate balance between autonomy and cooption—is required to allow the intent of the artwork to remain intact. Subversion is never fixed, but must shift as the conditions around it encroach on the meaning of the work.

The third research question required an analysis of how performance art practices use the material, symbolic and social relations of site, such as the street and gallery, to activate participation and provoke critique. As Kwon has identified, site as a social, material and symbolic space is highly contested—it is a contradictory fusion of commerce, civic regulation and everyday life. In Chapter six, *Site and Situation*, a series of pop-ups that temporarily adopted the street, a conference, a competition and a travelling exhibition were analysed. The pop-up forms were a means to create interstices for highlighting hidden tensions within contested sites.

Interactive methods adopted in the pieces *Triage*, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban The Biennale?* turned audiences' attention to the politics within their respective locations. The artworks invited critique because they were easily identified as shifting between fact and fiction. They did not only rely on performed actions, but consisted of conversations between the artist and audience that broke through the wall of performance, and addressed the shifting dynamics between the artist and participants in a humorous manner.

Triage, a memorial for a dead tree, revealed audiences were not necessarily passive, but passionate about a wide variety of topics related to the regulation of public space and environmental issues. The conversations prompted by the installation and performance were critical in activating and giving voice and a space to this passion. Unlike *Triage*'s altruistic approach, *Over the Barricade* and *Ban the Biennale?* employed provocative styles of protest to incite reactions from both the art crowd and the general public. The performances stirred conversations about the value of art and the evaluation of socially engaged art within a conference and an art competition. A variety of performance methods including props, protestors on a picket line and placards, were used to trigger reactions. The overt approach blended the sites of the artworld with the street, with the aim of lessening the divide between the two—a gap between art and life that Rancière suggests the artworld uses to maintain control of site.

By combining protest strategies with performative art conventions, these three pop-ups momentarily overtook their sites. The performative and visual aspects of the work enabled the aesthetic and political to occur simultaneously. They also made the tensions within the sites visible. *Attaché Case* also worked in this vein. Instead of fact-o-fiction, overt humour or loud protest, the work was a poetic disruption that gently inserted personal reflections on the regulation of site into a travelling exhibition and the news media. The inclusive approach enabled the voices of other artists to be heard. The discourse these interventions activated demonstrated how close-distance can create small spaces that produce critique, rather than radical wholesale transformations. They uncovered how close-distance is necessary within collaborative sites and situations, so that art can occupy an agonistic, in-between space that is not overtaken by activism, politics, commerce and entertainment.

Pop-Up Art contributes to discourses of artworld relationships, fiction, humour, and site. It offers original approaches to participatory and performative art practice through the method of close-distance—working in-between autonomy and co-option—to contend that critique is not quelled within contested social

spaces. While compromise can be a part of a creative process, and as audiences and commerce draw closer together, the political edge in art does not need to completely dissipate into being considered as only event culture, civic regulation or social works within communities.

The pop-ups within this project do not necessarily shift power; rather they assert a space for articulating critiques of the conventions that sustain power relations. The performative and impromptu interventions created interactions that activated both art and general audiences and quickened consciences. As poetic interruptions they posit questions about the regulation of site. The pop-ups may disappear physically but, as slight pricks of provocation, they highlight the habitus in sites such as art fairs, competitions and the street. Their power can be misunderstood if they appear to resist traditional structures that create order or social harmony.

The artworks created addressed questions driving socially engaged art practice—how can art be connected to real life, yet retain its unique ability to offer engaging experiences; and how can art embrace neoliberal conditions but retain a space for critique. These questions apply to all forms of collaborative and entrepreneurial relationships such as artist-artist, artist-participator, artist-curator and artist-commerce. *Pop-Up Art* found that within collaborative and entrepreneurial relationships the voice of the artist can be compromised. When an artwork is submerged in its site, it can become void of critique. A position of close-distance is often necessary for critique and subversion to take place.

Close-distance

Within the realm of increasing co-option between the artworld, social context and commerce, the distinction between the roles of artist, curator and audience are less defined. The pieces created for *Pop-Up Art* reveal the multiple positions of the artist as one who co-opts via provocation, mediation or participation, and one who is co-opted via commission, curation or sub-contract. The intention of this research project is not to reduce the relationships to binary positions, nor to reinstate the autonomy of the artist.

Through the socially engaged nature of the artworks and the multiple positions of the artist, it has been demonstrated that critique does not have to become absorbed through collaboration with participants, institutions or the commercial artworld. The pop-ups confirm the inevitability of compromise, but it does not make critique impotent.

Close-distance can offer an effective approach that impedes the absorption of art into a commercial context. It is a third space, not defined or separate, but a malleable position of in-betweenness. Its proximity to cooption and autonomy offers a reflexivity that is critically productive. Its essentially porous nature is a means to negotiate the complex power relations within various contested sites. Agility is necessary to keeping a constant rub within conditions that support art, but can also overtake art's critical ability. *Pop-Up Art* presents a range of modulations as to how the strategy of being in-between is feasible in temporary pop-up artworks that embrace, rather than resist, commercial settings. The third space that close-distance provides is not a passive, middle ground. Close-distance is a tactical approach that is carefully attuned to each context in which it operates. It is an active attitude that demands constant attention by the artist to maintain the essential balance of friction and sociability.

Close-distance is critical now as consensus politics is dominant and art is made increasingly buoyant by cultural enterprises and popular culture. Indeed, many of the pop-ups created for this project were supported by cultural institutions. Although the contemporary artworld embraces populism, access and inclusion is regulated. Close-distance aims to straddle multiple tangents—entertainment, populism, conviviality, aesthetics and activism—to create interstices for art and general audiences. The approach does not attempt to simplify art—instead it aims to create a language for art that can connect with complex audiences across various contexts. The register of ambiguity that fact-o-fiction and humour provides is acute in a commercial context that seeks to coopt art and audiences for its own purposes.

Close-distance provides the flexibility necessary for art to maintain relevance in sites that are in constant flux. It enables art to change tack when it is at the point of being coopted. Its elasticity allows for shifting to maintain constant subversion. Close-distance supports compromise as part of a creative process, but it is not becoming the same; it is not a mergence. It facilitates the necessary balance between co-option and autonomy to keep critique alive.

It could be argued that the position of close distance is a safe, unthreatening withdrawal from established positions. As the project demonstrates, the pop-ups were placed in tenuous situations where they could easily collapse. While the artworks revelled in blended environments, there was always a risk they would slip into compromise, autonomy or cooption. While the project is informed by diverse approaches to socially engaged art including avant-garde resistance, discursive art and community focused activities, *Pop-Up Art* asserts a conscious space for performative and participatory practices that sustain a strong aesthetic and lively debate. *Pop-Up Art* unearths ways intervention, fact-o-fiction and humour can be used within these practices as a means to break down social barriers and connect with audiences. The performances have identified how the material, symbolic and social relations of site can be activated to provoke questioning of the conventions of social space. They hold true to the idea that art must create a rub.

This project also reveals the potential for further research beyond the scope of a PhD. Further investigation could be undertaken into how relational art practices, which employ performance, participation and creative disruption, could be sustained in long-term real life projects. This could extend to the prescient role of fiction and ambiguity in a “post-truth” (Parreno 2016) climate. Extended research could also be conducted into the way ethical processes can fully support researchers and participants engaged in art practices that employ performative intervention and surprise. This is particularly pertinent as ethical practices in art are increasingly being scrutinised within institutional (academic, public and funding) contexts, as the professionalisation of art undergoes increased regulation. *Pop-Up Art* reinforces the unique ability of art to question assumptions about the design and habitation of our social

environments. In social spaces, real life interventions do not always require quantifiable results or a radical break to produce rupture. A light, humorous and illusive touch can posit questions, provoke rethinking and reimagining.

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Yuen, T & De Koning, M 2013, 'Skate Sculpture', conference paper, *The Uses of Art in Public Space Research Symposium*, Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, on 12 February.

i. Plain Language Statement



School of Art, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

POP-UP ART PROJECT

Artist: Peter Burke
Supervisor: Dr Kristen Sharp Email: kristen.sharp@rmit.edu.au

Namaste!

My name is Peter Burke. I am an artist from Australia. I am completing a PhD project at RMIT University within the College of Design and Social Context and the School of Art. My project is about street vendors in India. I would like to invite you to participate in the project by interacting with a performance and by having your photo taken and/or being recorded on video.

Please read this letter carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions please ask me.

What is the project about?

This art project is about street vendor stalls in India. I am researching their visual presentation and how the vendors interact with their customers. My project at the India Art Fair is a mobile art gallery. The project is approved by RMIT's Human Research Ethics Committee. I would like to have conversations with the visitors and record them on video. I would also like to take their photographs (with your consent). The photos will be viewed in a workbook by my assessors. You will be asked to view the mobile gallery. I would also like to record the visitors interaction with the gallery on audio, but if you would feel more comfortable if you were not recorded or photographed, please let me know.

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

- Interact with the mobile gallery (takes approximately 1–5 minutes)
- Have your photograph taken with the gallery (you may choose how you would like to be photographed)

What will happen to my information?

With your consent, I would like to include some of your comments and your photo in a workbook for my university project and make a series of artworks that will be seen by my examiners and be publically available on my website peterburke.com.au

What are my rights as a participant?

You may use your first name or another name you provide, or you can be anonymous. You can withdraw your consent from the project at any time and withdraw any unprocessed data. Please tell me today or via email if you do not want your photo or comments used and I will destroy them. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Finally – a big thank you!

शैंगक यू

Peter Burke
 PhD art student
 School of Art, RMIT University
 Melbourne, Australia

Any complaints about this project may be directed to the Ethics Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is +61 3 9925 2251. Details of the complaints procedure are available on the [Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT](#) webpage.

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ii. Consent Form



POP-UP ART PROJECT

Artist / PhD Candidate: Peter Burke
Supervisor: Dr Kristen Sharp Email: kristen.sharp@rmit.edu.au

Participant's consent

1. I have had the project explained to me
2. The name I would like to use is: ☐ my real name ☐ my nickname ☐ no name
2. I would like to participate in an: ☐ interview ☐ audio/video ☐ photo
3. I understand that:
- (a) My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
 - (b) The project is for research and may not be of direct benefit to me.
 - (c) There is no money exchanged for the interview recorded on video nor any photos.
 - (c) My information will be kept private and only disclosed where I have given consent.
 - (d) My information will be securely stored at all times. My information may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be used for a research workbook. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Please sign: _____ Date: _____
(Signature)

Any complaints about this project may be directed to the Ethics Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is +61 3 9925 2251. Details of the complaints procedure are available on the [Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT](#) webpage.

iii. Interviews

- a. Interviews with street vendors in Canal Street, Union Square, Coney Island, New York, September 2011.
- b. Interviews with street vendors in Ghitorni and Lajpat Nagar markets, New Delhi, January 2012 and January 2013.
- c. Interviews with pedestrians in Warrnambool, Victoria, November 2012.
- d. Interviews with street vendors in Swanston Street, Melbourne, July 2013.
- e. Interviews with pedestrians, *Triage*, Melbourne, July-September 2013.
- f. Interviews with *India Art Fair* visitors, January 2013.

iv. Articles

a. Disclaimer: Letter from the Editor, *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, 2012.

Whaleburger anyone? Readers rest easy, we're not Portuguese and the Mahogany Ship still lies buried in the sand awaiting a miraculous discovery (let's face it, it's never going to happen is it). And as for a round footy, well, only a boofhead would fall for that one.

Welcome to the Warrnambool Art Gallery's cheeky take on *The Standard*. Unlike the real thing, you can't take anything seriously in this edition. The work of Melbourne-based artist Peter Burke, The 'WAG' *Standard* is a work of art and like all good art is designed to subvert, get you thinking, or laughing, or sneering, or joking, or talking or just looking – whatever.

We were going to let Peter loose on the real front page of *The Standard* to showcase his twisted look at Warrnambool, but we got cold feet at the last minute because I wasn't brave enough to handle the consequences.

The WAG edition is the gallery's artistic contribution to *The Standard's* 140th exhibition, The Story So Far, which celebrates 140 years of the newspaper, the district and its people. We think it's a fun and frivolous way for the gallery to contribute to the newspaper's momentous journey chronicling the trials and tribulations of the south-west. If only those stories were real...

Editor-in-chief

b. Collins P 2012, *Media art creates a cheeky Standard*, The Standard, 12 November 2012. Available at: <<http://www.standard.net.au/story/947775/media-art-creates-a-cheeky-standard>>

Warrnambool Art Gallery's contribution to *The Standard's* 140th birthday celebrations — its own humorous version of the newspaper — has taken many readers by surprise. Many readers failed to see the artistic merit in the four-page supplement included in Saturday's paper, even though it had an explanatory message from the editor on page two and the stories were clearly made up.

The Standard received more than 30 text messages, mostly from readers who seemed to have believed the stories about hoons finding the Mahogany Ship, suggested name changes for Warrnambool, a piece of public art on lappers and proposed footy rule changes to allow round balls.

Most of the comments were about the name change story which suggested Framlingbool, Lady Bay or Mahogany. "There are far more important things for council to do than change our city's name," said JS. And staythesame said, "why change it after 150 years, every town has nick names". Footfan asked, "round footy, bringing in skirts as well?".

The intention to stir public debate is in keeping with the gallery's new goal of trying to engage the community more with provocative humour, hence its' rebranding to WAG. A Gallery spokesman said the supplement was simply to get the audience thinking and talking about the role of the modern newspaper.

"The WAG is encouraging a bit of playful free-thinking in the hope of making some cultural change and our foray into print media is one aspect of that," he said. "With the help of media artist Peter Burke we have created an irreverent piece of artwork for every home in Warrnambool. "The Saturday Standard, including the artwork, costs \$1.70 (which is pretty cheap for art, might I add), so I estimate that Burke's articles took up about two cents worth of space. "We hope everybody took the project in the best possible light, but to those

whom we have offended I ask — if we don't put our two cents in, how can we get change?"

Burke, who has completed similar assignments in other centres, said he would be keen to do another Warrnambool supplement, this time involving more public contribution.

"I think it's great that *The Standard* and the art gallery have been brave enough to take it on," he said. "It is fantastic people have responded so passionately to topics that are obviously important to them."

The Standard editor said Burke was chosen to create a cheeky and gently-subversive alternative version of the paper which would get people talking. "It seems he has achieved his aim".

v. Audience Comments

a. SMS messages sent to *The Standard*, 10 November 2012 (as transcribed).

You call that art? What a waste of paper—S

Too early for April fools day good one standard—J.S.

How about this, if Peter Burke receives funding for his art it should be cut—PAUL

Doh! Never mind Mahogany ... I was really excited about an Oporto's opening—Anon

Changing warrnambool's name. What a crock. Leave it the way it is. There are far more important things for council to do other than change our cities name—JS

U have got 2 b joking leave the name and its associated history alone—Jan

Wats ms jenni anne jones smith mean warrnambools name is 2 long? she has 4 sir names—Bill

WHY WOULD W"BOOL B CALLED FRAMLINGBOOL U IDIOT—JOC

Ms jones smith re name change if that is the only thing you have to think about give up planning and enrol in a local kindergarden to improve your thinking—old timer

I think the name change is stupid , why should we have to change the name for stupid people who can't google it or look on a map , its not even hard to spell , the names in the paper are stupid , why change it after 150 years , every town has nick names , and it would cost to much to update everything , just leave it as it should be—staythesame

Change Warrnambool's name? What rubbish. Just because some illiterates can't handle words of more than one syllable. Talk about pandering to the lowest common denominator by some Johnny-come-lately. How much ratepayers' money would be wasted on this crackpot idea?—Agnes

What a load of rubbish, you obviously haven't traveled much, a large number of towns/citys names are abbreviated, leave our city name alone, at least we are proud to live here—*anon*

I for one, am not excited about changing the name of my home town. Why do we have the right, to replace a name, that originates from our local Indigenous Australians. Changing our name is just going to cause confusion, due to this so called 'identity crisis'. It wont just be our community that has to adapt to the new name. But the whole of Australia that knows our name, and where we are. Also, our visitors from all over the world. Maybe instead of complaining about the misspelling, of the long loved name of Warrnambool. We should concentrate on re-educating our youth, and adults, of the correct spelling. Why resort to such drastic measures, when it is not necessary—*Concerned*

How ridiculous!! You can call Warrnambool what you like.... I will still call this city WARRNAMBOOL—*Home*

Leave our town's name alone—*EC*

A new name will inspire nothing, You wouldnt go and change for example Geelong's name to something else because they call it Gtown. I don't even know how the council could consider something as stupid as this. And who's paying for the signs and all that to change? Haha not me!—*Britt*

You have to be joking thinking about changing warrnambool's name. We say get a life! There needs to be something put down at the pier, eg ship to bring that area to life with all its history so all can see and other things other places where clearly seen to represent the coast line. Not this art stuff down the main street which means absolutely nothing ! Look around what do you see maybe flagstaff hill if ya lucky to see it and its something that all cannot see when ya come into town, go for that drive around town or on your walk. There would be no difference whatsoever to people if ya change a name maybe make it easier for teaches and aust post but for goodness sake what is it really about - attracting tourists to the area and community pride or a few people having trouble spelling! – *not happy*
How ridiculous to seek to change the towns name, we live in Warrnambool fools; calling it Warnie or 'the Bool' are terms of endearment for a home town, that's all, it is an indigenous name meaning where two rivers meet the sea and a unforgivable insult to consider changing it.—*Insulted*

Now that warrnambool has its own historic ship perhaps it will relinquish its false claims on the loch ard—*Di*

This Mahogany ship find is exciting as it has always been speculated that there were two ships. One already found and will be revealed come summer!

The teens that so called found the mahogany ship shouldn't get anything if they were doing it on the rode they wouldn't get away with being hoons so why in gods name should this be any different?—*anon*

Heros !!! Not hoons... Well done men! You will be remembered as "treasure hunters" of the south west !!—*anon*

A drag strip and burn out pad close to the cbd is just what warrnambool needs. Not a sculpture of a vehicle doing a burnout. We don't want to travel half an hour out of town to have our fun and still be doing things illegally. I'm sure after a few weeks of young hoons punishing there vehicles legally there desire to race and fry there tyres will fade dramatically. There vehicle control skills will enhance as they realize the ability of what a vehicle can and can't do. This in hand brings out more of a mature young driver which is what the government and other Australian motorist want—*Older hoon*

We moved to warrnambool 7 years ago and after seeing an article like that question whether done right thing!—*second thoughts*

Round ball? Your f**king joking right?—*D*

Round footy?!?! Bringing skirts in as well?—*footyfan*

- b. SMS comments posted on *The Standard's* website 10—14 November 2012 (as transcribed).

Brilliant ha ha. the artist should get the \$250000 reward from the mahogany ship. good effort mate—*R*

I want a whale burger. Mmmmmm ... Blubber!—*Artofthecobra*

Great stuff WAG, enjoyed it no end, (after brief excitement followed by disappointment that the wreck hadn't been found really). Well done to the Editor for running with it and for sharing the experience of last minute "cold feet" over putting it on the real front page. More positive stuff about our area please.—*CM*

Will you be printing 'Art' all the time from now on? I don't have time to be reading the fineprint on a different page to see if a story is fact or fiction. I used to trust the newspaper to deliver the facts.—*Whats the point?*

My goodness! It was a front page layout in the middle of the newspaper, full of absurd stories! If you don't have alarm bells going off in your head when you read that, you probably deserve to be offended or tricked.—
BoyO

Is it online?—Jye

It's not, sorry. The gallery might have plans of its own to upload it.—
Warrnambool Standard

vi. Research Activities

Projects / Performances / Exhibitions

- 2016 *Art for Social Change*, The Incinerator, Moonee Ponds.
- 2015 *Low Cost Diplomatic Bag* (curated by Nilo Casares, Art EX, Spain), travelling exhibition, Immigration Museum, Melbourne and 16 countries across Europe, USA & Australia.
Trashlation (curated by Basurama and Art EX, Spain) University Hall, University of Melbourne, Parkville & Madrid.
- 2014 *Streetworks*, Spare Room / Project Space, RMIT, Melbourne.
Lorne Sculpture Biennale, Lorne.
Artworks and Exchanges: Spectres of Evaluation (with Louise Lavarack), Roslyn Smorgan Gallery, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Footscray, and The Incinerator, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne.
Social Capital (with Adele Varcoe) curated by Jacqueline Doughty, *Melbourne Art Fair*, Exhibition Building, Melbourne.
Loose Footing, Youkobo Artspace, Tokyo.
- 2013 *Mapping Shanghai*, Bund 33 Art Centre, Shanghai.
Triage (with Louise Lavarack), Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.
Tree Hug Blitz (with Louise Lavarack), Melbourne.
Sparkel (with Jason Maling and Torie Nimmervoll), White Night, Melbourne.
Pursuit (Commissions: *India Art Fair*, New Delhi [in collaboration with Nature Morte]; *ArtStage Singapore*. Impromptu: *Kochi-Muziris Biennale*, Kerala; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne).
- 2012 *The Standard Special Lift-Out*, Warrnambool Art Gallery, Warrnambool.
Occasions (curated by Mick Douglas & DOS Collective), Boire, Collingwood, Melbourne.
Pursuit (Commissions: *India Art Fair*, New Delhi; *Margaret Lawrence Gallery*, Southbank. Impromptu: *Melbourne Art Fair*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; *Biennale of Sydney*).
- 2011 *Aura: The Haunted Image*, Level 17 Artspace, Melbourne
Text (as) Image (curated by Kirsten Rann), Impact 7, Level 17 Artspace, Melbourne.
Seeing to a Distance: Single Channel Video Work from Australia (curated by Amanda Morgan), Level 17 Artspace, Melbourne.
Findings, Trocadero Artspace, Footscray.

Residencies

- 2015 Sanskriti Kendra, New Delhi
- 2014 Youkobo Artspace, Tokyo

Lectures / Artist Talks

- 2016 *Pop-Up Art in Social Space*, Conversations on Social Practice, RMIT University, Melbourne, 8 December.
- 2015 *Performative Pop-Ups: The Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*, Cities in a Climate of Change: Public Art and Environmental and Social Ecologies, IAPA, Shandong University of Art and Design, Jinan, China, 23 September.
- 2015 *Pop-Up Art*, Artists Talk, Shandong University of Art and Design, Jinan, China, 23 September.
- 2015 *Peter Burke – Artist Talk*, Centre for Cultural Partnerships, Victorian College of Arts, University of Melbourne, 27 August.
- 2015 *Pop-Up Art*, The Social Response: a Dialogue around Art and Social Engagement, Centre for Art, Society and Transformation, RMIT University, Melbourne, 5 August.
- 2015 *Double-take: Creative Disruptions to Everyday Life*, Cities in a Climate of Change: Public Art and Environmental and Social Ecologies, University of Auckland, 3 July.
- 2015 *Pop-Ups: Creative Disruptions in the Artworld and the Street*, Contempart15, Dakam, Istanbul, Turkey, 8 June.
- 2014 *Artworks and Exchanges* (chaired by Marnie Badham), Spectres of Evaluation: Rethinking Art, Community, Value, Centre for Cultural Practice, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Footscray, 7 February.

Catalogues

- Art for Social Change*, The Incinerator, 2016.
- Low Cost Diplomatic Bag*, Art EX Madrid, 2014-6.
- Social Capital*, MAF Edge, Melbourne Art Fair, 2014.
- Lorne Sculpture Biennale*, 2014.
- Artworks and Exchanges, Spectres of Evaluation: Rethinking Art, Community, Value*, Centre for Cultural Practice, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 2014.
- Seeing to a Distance: Single Channel Video Work from Australia*, catalogue essay, 2011.

Reviews

- Pryor, S 2015, 'Handcuffs lead to diplomatic art incident', *The Canberra Times*, 7 February.
- Maher, L 2015, 'Art project gives refugees an international voice at Spanish embassy', 666 ABC, 6 February.
- Ross, A 2013, 'Bandaged Tree Gets the Chop after Plenty of Raps', *The Age*, 16 September.
- Green S 2013, 'Watch out vandals, our love of trees has very deep roots', *The Age*, 3 August.
- Poisoned plane tree wrapped in bandages in Melbourne's CBD*, 2013, ABC News Online, 25 June.
- Schetzer, A, 2013, 'Tree triage highlights a different sort of vandalism', *The Weekly Review*, 16 July.
- Lawrence, M 2012, 'Hey mister, wanna buy a painting?' *Inside Art*, CH31 TV, Melbourne, September 2012.
- Lawrence, M 2012, 'Guerilla gallerist is back for more', *Inside Art*, CH31 TV, October.
- Collins, P 2012, 'Media art creates a cheeky standard', *The Standard*, 10 November.
- Hill, P & Malley, E 2012, 'Absinthe Makes the Heart Grow Fonder', *Art Monthly*, issue 220, June.
- Varma, A 2012, 'A Fair Analysis', *The Wall*, issue 2, March.
- Sharma, S 2012, 'Art Fare', *The Indian Express*, 28 January.
- Sondeep, S 2012, 'Windows', *The Asian Age*, 28 January.

Grants / Awards

- 2015 HDR Candidate Research Fund, RMIT University.
- 2013 Student Mobility Grant, RMIT University.
- 2011 HDR Candidate Research Fund, RMIT University.
- 2011 Australian Postgraduate Award.